



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY and the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 263
**Maryland Higher Education Commission – Access to Mental Health Advisory
Committee – Establishment**
February 8, 2023
Favorable with Amendments

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 263. The bill establishes the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee within the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to study the access to mental health services for students. Senate Bill 263 brings some of this work to the MHEC Secretary, and while the USM appreciates the participation, we have offered amendments to strengthen a well-established process.

In October of 2019 the University System of Maryland (USM), Morgan State University (MSU), and St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) were required to complete a Joint Chairmen's Report on Mental Health Services. Since January 2020, the USM began regularly convening the counseling center leadership from our constituent institutions. With these (at least) every-other-month meetings, counseling center and mental health professionals talk and collaborate directly with their peers on topics including, but not limited to: campus updates and sharing of best practices; outreach to students; assessment of data; effects of budget constraints; supporting out-of-state students; serving the needs of students as they pertain to changes and adjustments that can be attributed to COVID-19 and civil unrest; unique ways to provide services and address student needs while easing and monitoring health safety protocols; and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and racial injustice on underrepresented communities.

USM has and will continue to examine challenges in meeting the demand for mental health services, best practices for off-campus mental health services, best practices for the implementation of services, staffing, regional concerns, best models for providing care, and more.

Our institutions were able to handle this request with few challenges because for the three years prior, USM, MSU, and St. Mary's vice presidents for student affairs (VPSA), in close partnership with campus health center directors, counseling center directors, and the USM Office of Academic and Student Affairs, embraced the challenges surrounding mental health services in higher education. These in-depth conversations include the sharing of best practices and the evaluation of efforts deemed less successful.

One of the group's most recent organized efforts to study access to mental health care in higher education was the creation of a survey. The VPSAs developed the survey, which included questions about staffing for on-campus centers; the profile of counseling centers and services including accreditations; trends in demand for services; strategies being used/considered to meet

escalating demand; counseling center staff to student ratio; scope of services; expenditures; appointment management; outreach and education; best practices; evaluation of mental health services over time; availability of off-campus resources; reasons students seek support; and services to off-campus student populations.

Select results of this survey were shared with the USM Board of Regents in June 2018, when the Board received a presentation on Trends in Campus Mental Health Services. The presentation featured Liz Brown, Senior Consultant at the Education Advisory Board (www.eab.com), who offered a national view of how institutions are meeting escalating demand, and Dr. Nancy Young, Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, who offered perspective into how campus-based experts are shifting their thinking and practices to best meet the mental health needs of students. Since that time, the vice presidents have continued to address these issues monthly and in more depth at their annual retreats. The Board of Regents dedicated an Educational Forum to mental health during one of its 2021-2022 academic year meetings. The hope is that members of the General Assembly remain aware of the significant work that is being done by the institutions of higher education in Maryland.

The USM seeks to quantify the number of campus-based counseling center directors and clinical psychologists participating in the advisory committee. This is important to encapsulate the diversity of USM institutions and ensure that the Chancellor appoints these important representatives. Secondly, the General Assembly deserves the most detailed and accurate information. **Extending a final report deadline to December 1, 2024, allows for the time and care necessary to provide a clear picture of service and care at USM institutions.**

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our thoughts regarding Senate Bill 263.

Proposed amendments:

Page 2; lines 9-12 are amended to read:

~~(7) A DIRECTOR OF A CAMPUS-BASED~~ [THREE DIRECTORS OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND INSTITUTION MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING CENTER[S], APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY CHANCELLOR;]

~~(8) A CAMPUS-BASED~~ [THREE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND INSTITUTION PSYCHOLOGIST[S], APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY [CHANCELLOR];

On page 2; after line 21 add:

(12) THREE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVED IN CAMPUS- BASED MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS ADVOCACY.

Page 4; lines 5 is amended to read:

~~(H) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2021, AND ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1 EACH YEAR THEREAFTER,~~



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

USM Office of Government Relations - Patrick Hogan: phogan@usmd.edu