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Governor

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Lt. Governor

**Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D.**  
Chair

**February 8, 2023**  
**Senate Bill 263 Testimony**  
**Maryland Higher Education Commission**

**TESTIMONY OF DR. EMILY DOW, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS OF THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION, BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 8, 2023, REGARDING SENATE BILL 263, MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION – ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE - ESTABLISHMENT**

Good afternoon Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak in support of Senate Bill 263 and offer four suggested amendments.

I am Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary of Academic Affairs for the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

Senate Bill 263 would establish the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee within the Maryland Higher Education Commission. It would require the Committee to submit an annual report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Senate Budget & Taxation and Education, Energy, and Environment Committees and the House Appropriations and Ways & Means Committees beginning on December 1, 2023.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission would suggest the following amendments be made to Senate Bill 263:

1. Alter the composition to include non-campus based professionals, for example representatives from the Mental Health Association of Maryland or the American College Health Association (a few examples and not an exhaustive list of possibilities);
2. Alter the composition to include a member of the MHEC Student Advisory Council, the Student Commissioner, or a currently enrolled student at a Maryland college or university;
3. Alter the composition to include a non-mental health campus-based professional (e.g., faculty, academic advisor, etc.); and
4. Change the reporting requirement to every 2 years.

The MHEC Student Advisory Council and Faculty Advisory Council have recently discussed the importance of access to mental health resources. The proposed Mental Health Advisory Committee would create a formal context to discuss relevant issues and proposed recommendations to the Commission.

For these reasons, the Maryland Higher Education Commission requests the committee return a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report on Senate Bill 263.