



**Testimony in support of  
Senate Bill 582: Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral  
Health Model for Maryland)**

**Finance Committee  
Position: Favorable**

March 7, 2023

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policy changes to further educational equity and build the technical capacity of everyday Marylanders to hold state and local officials accountable to their responsibilities. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on Senate Bill 582: Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland).**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. This involves a significant investment in behavioral and mental health services and supports, including the expansion of community schools in the State, the creation of the Consortium on Coordinated Community-Based Supports, and increased school based health center funding. This bill supports the work of the Blueprint through addressing access to behavioral health services in the State.

Our country is in the midst of a national youth mental health crisis. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that while there have been considerable measures taken to address adult mental health issues post-pandemic, there are often considerable gaps in capacity to serve youth

and families.<sup>1</sup> In Maryland specifically, the Anne E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count data shows that in 2020, 12.8% of children and teens experienced anxiety or depression.<sup>2</sup> Further, LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience mental health challenges, but less likely to receive help. One survey found that 60% of LGBTQ youth who wanted mental health care in the past year were not able to get it.<sup>3</sup> Left unaddressed, students with mental health challenges can experience multiple negative outcomes, including trouble making friends, learning, concentrating, and completing work, as well as poor grades, absences, suspension, expulsion, and suicide.<sup>4</sup>

This bill aligns with the Blueprint's vision of investments to pre-emptively and responsively address school community behavioral and mental health needs. Therefore, **we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 582.**

*For more information, contact Maddie Long:  
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<sup>1</sup> [U.S. HHS](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Anne E. Casey Foundation](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Trevor Project](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Groves Learning Institute](#)