



March 9, 2023

The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Government Operations Committee
House Office Building - Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbear
Ways & Means Committee
House Office Building - Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Oppose – HB 1224: Public Schools - Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based Health Centers and Public Schools - Parental Notice

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk, Chair Atterbear, and Honorable Members of the Committees:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS oppose House Bill 1224: Public Schools - Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based Health Centers and Public Schools - Parental Notice (HB 1224). HB 1224 appears to be in reaction to a bill from last session that passed last year and lowered the age of consent for health care treatment to twelve. MPS/WPS would note that we opposed that bill. In fact, the current law was mainly introduced to allow school-based clinicians to serve vulnerable populations like LGBTQ kids who might not have parental support. In addition, current law allows the clinician to decide when to contact the guardian based on clinical necessity. Although MPS/WPS opposed the current law with an age of consent of 12, since guardian involvement is almost always needed for adequate care, this bill is an overreaction as it practically reverses the ability of the youth to consent, including 16 and 17-year-olds who have been able to provide their own consent for years. For many LGBT youth, this could lead to them avoiding treatment or even additional stress within the family. Although our practitioners try to have parents involved, this should be a clinician's decision after weighing the risks and benefits.

Therefore, MPS/WPS ask this committee for an unfavorable report on HB 1224. If you have any questions concerning this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society



Legislative Action Committee