

January 17, 2024

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

NAMI MD supports public policies and laws that enable all schools, public and private, to increase access to appropriate mental health services. Undiagnosed, untreated, or inadequately treated mental illnesses in children can significantly interfere with a student's ability to learn, grow and develop. Because children spend much of their productive time in school, NAMI believes that both public and private elementary, middle, and high schools should provide and/or facilitate and sustain provision of appropriate mental health services, supports, and appropriate accommodations.

This includes convenient and easily accessible information, including widely publicized availability of the 24/7 crisis hot-line. By including the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in school handbooks and on student's school identification cards, we are equipping Maryland's youth with appropriate mental health and crisis services, should they ever need to utilize them.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.