

Senate Bill 165 / House Bill 204
Education – Coaches – Mental Health First Aid Training
January 17, 2024
Favorable with Amendment

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share St. Mary's College of Maryland's position on Senate Bill 165. In general, this bill requires various education segments – including high schools and institutions of higher education – to develop and offer mental health first aid training to coaches in their athletic programs.

As the number of individuals experiencing mental illness continues to increase, St. Mary's College of Maryland and our staff remain committed to supporting our students through comprehensive and holistic approaches. In addition to the traditional stressors faced by students as they transition to a college setting, student athletes face additional challenges due to training and performance requirements associated with their sport of choice. In light of these challenges, several years ago St. Mary's College of Maryland developed and implemented a Mental Health & Catastrophic Emergency Action Plan to ensure our coaches, athletic trainers, team physicians, Wellness Center staff, and administrators are aligned in their efforts to identify at-risk students. This action plan is reviewed and updated annually, and is intended to bolster our pre-existing Athletics policies, which are informed by and comply with the National Collegiate Athletic Association's [Mental Health Interdisciplinary Team Planner](#).

St. Mary's College of Maryland is deeply supportive of efforts to improve mental health services for our students, and suggests one technical amendment to clarify that, although coaches receive training to identify mental and behavioral health indicators of depression, trauma, et al., coaches may not be held liable in the event of adverse circumstances. For these reasons, I urge a *favorable with amendment* report on SB165.



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