

Good Afternoon, and thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

Today, I come before you in my most important role, and one which many of you share: that of a parent.

Nothing is more important than your child's health and wellbeing, both physical and mental. Even in the throes of adolescence, when your child is at their least communicative, you develop a sixth sense for when something is out of order. Within seconds of asking your child how they're doing, you know if they're being burdened by something, even if they don't openly acknowledge as much.

That's what happened the weekend of October 11, 2019, when I visited Salisbury University's Parent Weekend. It was then I knew something was unusual and out of sorts. Sure enough, by the following Monday, he was calling me saying that he feared for his safety and needed to leave campus immediately. That's when it emerged that Cameron was experiencing a physical and mental breakdown from sexually- and racially-charged graffiti engraved on the walls of his first class **and he was** the one who reported it not once but twice to the university's officials.

Nobody - *nobody* - should feel compelled to place their child in perceived danger over financial obligations. Yet that is what the University administration, through their words and actions, sought to do - an injustice that this bill rightly seeks to prevent from recurring.

In my professional life, I interact with mental health providers and patients, and I see firsthand how our society ignores, disregards, or outright dismisses their struggles simply because they lack the visibility of a wheelchair, a crutch, or a cast.

To be clear, what we are discussing are indeed "extenuating circumstances": circumstances that make it impossible for a student to

attend class, to engage in coursework, and to be a functioning part of the university community.

This bill is a crucial next step toward making sure that our institutes of higher education are a safe and supportive place for our young people to grow as intellectuals and as citizens.

I look forward to seeing the successful passage of this Senate Bill 567 into law.