



**Testimony in opposition to
House Bill 65: Public Schools – Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based
Health Centers and Public Schools – Parental Notice**

**Health and Government Operations Committee
Ways and Means Committee**

Position: Oppose

March 13, 2024

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. **Strong Schools Maryland strongly urges an unfavorable vote on House Bill 65: Public Schools – Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based Health Centers and Public Schools – Parental Notice.**

House Bill 65 describes itself as advancing the rights of parents, but instead contains the following provisions, ranging from unnecessary to harmful:

- Requires that any healthcare professional in a public school who provides a health service to a student must notify the student’s parent or guardian of any consultation, diagnosis, or treatment provided to the student.
 - Challenges Maryland’s current law governing a minor’s ability to give informed consent for care.
- Makes the Maryland General Assembly an ally of all manner of abusive parents/guardians by finding that no information about the health and well-being of a minor should be withheld from the child’s parent/guardian.
 - Poses conflicts for mandated reporters of child abuse in schools when the abuse is coming from the student’s home; undermines the authority of public schools to act *in loco parentis*.

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.¹ In Maryland specifically, the Anne E. Casey Foundation’s

¹ [U.S. HHS](#)

Kids Count data shows that in 2020, 12.8% of children and teens experienced anxiety or depression.² 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.³ School-based health programs are working to expand and utilize existing services to address these issues; however, the risks associated with this bill could actually worsen these statistics as students may not feel comfortable or safe sharing information with parents.

The Mental Health Access Initiative, passed in 2021 lowered the age for a minor to give informed consent in certain situations to a minor who is at least age 12. This was codified for a reason, yet this bill conflicts with students' rights to autonomy and privacy.

Strong Schools Maryland works to build power with directly impacted Marylanders—including a diverse range of parents in every corner of the state—to ensure we can collectively shape the World-Class system of education we're striving for. House Bill 65 will not get us there; it will complicate and harm the already complex journey we face to create globally competitive schools for all students.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 65.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

² [Anne E. Casey Foundation](#)

³ [The Trevor Project](#)