

I am Maya Tarantino, a senior from Dulaney High School in Baltimore County Maryland. I have two perspectives to share with you today in supporting HB0074, the LifeSavers Bill, my first being the emphasis on mental health education in schools.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in teens ages 15-19, a devastating statistic. Devastating is being 17 years old and having witnessed the loss of four peers to death by suicide in my high school years alone. Devastating is hearing the news through the Baltimore Sun sitting in Spanish class rather than through administration. As a Maryland Public School System student, I have experienced firsthand the importance of mental health education in protecting our youth.

There has been a severe lack of education and training within school buildings in times of social and emotional crisis. Students are taking this issue into their own hands and are working to create change within their buildings. Through organizations such as Morgans Message, Work2BeWell, and Active Minds, students have been given resources and opportunities to improve student wellness. At school, I started the club Not On Our Watch, an advocacy group to put an end to the crises we have faced thus far and ensure not another life is lost... not on our watch. I speak for all 50 members of our club when I say students are eager to continue making this change, and through the LifeSaver School program, excited to be recognized for all the work they have done already.

My second perspective for you is not as a fierce mental health advocate but as a student-athlete favoring CPR and first aid training in schools. By incentivizing schools to have available CPR and first-aid training for students, safety is prioritized in the building. As a student-athlete, I understand the importance of having well-trained personnel in times of physical distress. While we often hope serious injuries don't occur during sports games, our Baltimore County community has seen firsthand the importance of CPR training. In 2021, a Loyola High lacrosse player and peer of mine, Peter Laake, was hit in the chest by a shot and went into commotio cordis, blunt trauma to the heart. While the team had trained professionals to perform CPR and resuscitate him in the game setting, this left the question of what could happen when students play on their own time. Whether it be pick-up after school or captains' practices, we need to ensure athletes are prepared for the worst and have the training needed to mitigate harm until professionals can arrive. The importance of certified CPR and first-aid training saves lives.

In a time that experts are calling a "mental health epidemic" and sports injuries are on the rise, this is a no-cost solution aimed at saving lives. This bill will continue to support the enrichment of our Maryland Schools. On behalf of all students, I ask the general assembly to show their support and help in ensuring no more lives are lost at the hands of our education system, not on our watch.

