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Maryland Association of Student Councils

HB0074

1 in every 8 people in the world live with a mental health disorder; that is one billion people, nearly 13% of the world population, who are directly impacted by mental health issues. When it comes to secondary students, that 13% becomes 77%.

The mental health crisis is an issue that is happening right in front of us. Across the United States, 1 in 5 teens have seriously considered suicide; that is 20% of our youth.

As a public school student at Dulaney High School in Baltimore County, I've seen the impacts of mental health issues firsthand. In my three years in high school, four students have died by suicide. The rise in suicidal trends not only in my school, but also at the county and state levels is terrifying. It has gotten to a point where students are taking action, because waiting for adults and administrators to take action can cost lives.

As the Mental Health Affairs Coordinator for the Maryland Association of Student Councils and Baltimore County Student Councils, I see students fighting to improve resources. They're doing this through the Baltimore County Mind Over Matters campaign, various mental health advisory councils, and the Maryland Association of Student Councils' mental health committee. This committee has created a Thought Box, in which students help other students discuss and solve mental health issues plaguing their communities. Students should not be placed in the position where they have to make changes and advocate to prevent their peers from making life-ending decisions.

The Lifesaver Program is a necessity in Maryland public schools because it aims to inspire schools to implement changes that would benefit their students. Installation of wellness centers, peer to peer supports, and CPR certifications are vital in saving lives; they should be required in schools in the same way that air conditioning and nurses are; mental health is just as important as physical health.

If this bill is implemented, I can ensure that MASC and BCSC will give our full support to promote this initiative in our public schools. As organizations, we prioritize the mental health needs of our students, and will endeavor to aid them by providing them with the additional support that this bill would mandate.

Please be a part in ending the reactive environment surrounding mental health crises, and assist in forming a proactive and preventative climate throughout the state. I urge you to please support HB-74, accurately entitled the Lifesaver Program, because that is exactly what it will do: save lives.

