

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland House of Delegates  
Ways and Means Committee - For the Hearing on  
Public Schools – Lifesaver Schools Program – Establishment HB74  
January 17, 2024  
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over ,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state’s premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***House Bill 74, Schools – Lifesaver Schools Program – Establishment, aligns with Free State PTA’s principles for legislative action<sup>1</sup> which states that schools must provide a safe environment where all students, teachers and staff can thrive.***

In alignment with our principles for legislative action, Implementing Inclusive curriculum. is one of our advocacy priorities for the 2024 legislative session. This bill establishes the Lifesaver Schools Program to recognize public schools that provide health and safety training to students and school personnel. A Lifesaver School offers students and staff the opportunity to learn lifesaving skills such as CPR, First Aid, and Mental Health or Peer Mentorship skills. Students would be empowered through education to step in at any time to help or save a friend on a loved one and staff would have the tools to keep all kids safe in their classroom or at school activities.

It was important to PTA members that this bill would not create an unfunded mandate, so we are pleased that it is an incentive to provide education and resources in an innovative fashion. Recognizing schools with this designation would also help parents and students understand that a school prioritizes safety. Considering the increase in the need for mental health services and the [increasing rates of suicide for all youth, but especially in youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth](#)<sup>2</sup>, providing training in suicide prevention could save lives and possibly reduce inequities. Free State PTA believes this bill is vital in ensuring the wellbeing of children and therefore, strongly urges that this committee issues a **favorable report on HB74.**

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fspta.org/files/ugd/d2f0e2\\_a663d6f6c6ad49a2aab4bc9c095c494f.pdf](https://www.fspta.org/files/ugd/d2f0e2_a663d6f6c6ad49a2aab4bc9c095c494f.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/07/psychologists-preventing-teen-suicide>