

BILL: Senate Bill 0492 / House Bill 0522 Public Schools- Student Telehealth Appointments - Policy and Access

DATE: February 7, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee

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GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, enthusiastically supports House Bill 0522, which would require county school boards to develop policies for student access to telehealth appointments during the school day, and require middle and high schools to secure a private space for telehealth appointments.

As the leading organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students in the state of Maryland, we believe this legislation is crucial in ensuring **every** student has healthcare access.

Because of societal stigma, bullying, and harassment, LGBTQ+ youth are at greater risk than their peers for mental health problems. The Trevor Project (2022) reports that 68% of LGBTQ+ youth in Maryland report dealing with anxiety, 53% report being depressed, and an alarmingly 43% have seriously considered suicide in the last year. Yet, the Trevor Project (2022) also finds that most LGBTQ+ students in the state of Maryland do not have access to mental health care. Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control (2019) finds health disparities between LGBTQ+ youth and their cisgender heterosexual peers. The CDC (2019) recommends that schools serve as important facilitators of general healthcare access for LGBTQ+ youth, noting that such actions improve the health of LGBTQ+ students.

We believe that expanding telehealth access for youth in Maryland schools will help address the gaps in access to care. Improving such access to care is critical in alleviating health disparities and ensuring that all children in Maryland public schools are ready to learn during the school day. Accordingly, GLSEN Maryland respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill 0522

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *School Health Profiles 2018: Characteristics of Health Programs Among Secondary Schools*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Trevor Project. (2022). 2022 *National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health by State*.
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Trevor-Project-2022-National-Survey-on-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-by-State.pdf>



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