

Senate Bill 310 – Education – Youth Suicide Prevention School Program - Revisions

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 12, 2025

Position: Support as Amended

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of SB 310 as amended.

SB 310 makes revisions to the Youth Suicide Prevention Program by adding information on suicide and gambling addiction to the program and updating certain language to be consistent with language in Blueprint.

Multiple studies have shown that there are significantly higher rates of suicidality among problem gamblers than non-gamblers or social gamblers.¹ Just as the Youth Suicide Prevention curriculum includes information on the correlation between drug and alcohol use and suicide, so too should it include information about the correlation between problem gambling and suicide. Youth often have the perception that gambling is a harmless pastime; they need to know that sometimes it is not.

Other revisions in the bill seek to align the language in this provision with language in the Blueprint. The Blueprint requires that all certified school personnel who have direct contact with students on a regular basis complete training on the skills required to “recognize student behavioral health issues” and “recognize students experiencing trauma or violence out of school” and “refer students to behavioral health services.” The amendment more closely reflects the intent of the language in the Blueprint by changing that the program “must recognize student behavioral health issues...” to the program “should promote recognizing student behavioral health issues...” MHAMD supports all efforts to educate both school personnel and students on behavioral health.

For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 310 as amended and urges a favorable report.

¹ Lia Power et.al. Suicidality and depression among youth gamblers: a preliminary examination of three studies. *International Gambling Studies* (2004). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1445979042000224412>.
Virve Marionnequ et.al. Gambling-related suicides and suicidality: a systematic review of qualitative evidence. *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (October 2022). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1445979042000224412>