



## **SB 310- Education-Youth Suicide Prevention School Program-Revisions**

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Date: 2/10/25**

**Position: FAV**

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. Using their personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide emotional support, resource connection and systems navigation as well as support groups and educational trainings and workshops.

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Last year, we served nearly 5,000 Families, and 2% of the families served were caregivers of a loved one with problem gambling, and the numbers continue to increase. MCF is requesting a favorable report for SB 310

- We have seen a troubling rise in gambling behaviors among school-aged children and young adults. The stigma surrounding gambling and the misinformation that gambling is a financial problem, not a behavioral health one, contribute to the uncertainty about where they should turn to for help. Problem gambling deeply impacts the mental health of individuals and families, leaving caregivers to navigate stress, anxiety, and isolation.
- Adolescents are particularly vulnerable as they engage in gambling through various online platforms. There is a strong correlation between problem gambling and mental health distress. Including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. By integrating these changes into the Youth Suicide Prevention School Program, we can address a critical gap in current efforts and provide the much-needed awareness and education to help prevent suicide among youth who struggle with problem gambling. Prevention is key in educating youth before they need treatment.



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