

HB0141_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
1/29/2025

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TESTIMONY ON HB#0141 - FAVORABLE
Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation

TO: Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0141, **Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has documented *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* ¹ The Mental Health Association of Maryland has offered definitions and possible solutions for *Loneliness and Social Connection* ²

This bill seeks to establish the State Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation to evaluate the causes of and other factors contributing to the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by individuals in the State, building on the work done by MHA of Maryland. It will accomplish that by requiring the Task Force to make recommendations regarding the creation of municipal-based social connection committees to address the isolation experienced by certain individuals. After collecting the data on the problem and suggesting how to remediate it the Task Force is mandated to report the findings to the Governor and certain committees of the General Assembly by June 30, 2026.

While the Maryland State Department of Education has a **Maryland School Mental Health Response Program (MD-SMHRP)** ³ this bill will encompass all Maryland's residents to define broad based solutions applicable to all of Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0141.

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

² <https://www.mhamd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Loneliness-and-Social-Connection-Fact-Sheet-2020.pdf>

³ <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/MentalHealth/index.aspx>

