

Written Testimony

HB672 Written Testimony – Health and Government Operations Committee
(2/12 at 1:00 PM) School Health and Wellness Personnel Assessment and Maryland
Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers
Montgomery County, Maryland Association of Student Councils
Azimullah Rifai – Poolesville High School

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

My name is Azimullah Rifai, and I am a student from Montgomery County. I serve in leadership roles within the Montgomery County Regional-SGA and the Maryland Association of Student Councils subcommittees, both of which advocate for policies that improve the well-being of students across the state. I am writing to you today to urge a favorable committee report on House Bill 672 (HB672) on behalf of students across Maryland.

I have spent years advocating for student well-being, aiming to understand the basis of its problems in Maryland, but it was not until I saw the failures of the system up close that I fully understood the gravity of this issue. A family friend from a neighboring county—a single mother—**had to sacrifice work hours every day to ensure her child had access to his medication at school.** The school lacked a full-time nurse, leaving her no choice but to stay nearby with medication, fearing the consequences of an emergency with no trained professional nearby. **Her job and income suffered, and yet, she had to prioritize something that should have never been in question: her child's health at school.**

No parent should have to choose between keeping their job and keeping their child safe. No student should have to sit in class worrying whether help will arrive in time during a medical emergency. Yet, across Maryland, this is the reality for thousands of families. In some counties, school nurses are forced to divide their time between multiple schools, responsible for the health and safety of hundreds, even thousands, of students spread across different campuses. We would never accept having one security officer for multiple schools or one teacher for multiple classrooms at the same time, so why do we allow this when it comes to the health and safety of our students? Problems like this have been ever-present, and **the need to gather data on school health services across the state to highlight the gaps in care is growing.**

HB672 is the first step toward fixing this problem. This bill will assess the current gaps in school health personnel across Maryland, ensuring that we have the data to address disparities and

improve access to care. The diverse composition of the Maryland Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers with the addition of a school nurse representative and pediatrician further ensures that healthcare professionals who directly engage with students and children are at the table shaping solutions to protect our future generations.

This is not just policy—it is about protecting Maryland’s students. Our schools should be places where students can learn without fear that a medical emergency will go unanswered. Families should be able to trust that their children are safe. But that will never happen unless we commit to truly understanding the state of healthcare in our schools and take action to fix what is broken. With that, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB672. Thank you for your time and consideration.