

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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

I am Senator Simonaire presenting SB 310 Revisions to the *MD Youth Suicide Prevention School Program*

I have a wide support from Dept of Health to Education to Medical to Mental Health to Casino operators.

Two issues I have focused on this committee,

While separate -- Both often intersect: Suicide and Gambling.

Last year, you helped me pass “*Md Veterans Suicide Prevention*” legislation.

Suicide is a tragic end to anyone’s life, whether a veteran, neighbor or student.

In Maryland we created the *MD Youth Suicide Prevention School Program* to provide guidance on suicide and the various influences that lead to it.

This bill updates the Program which hasn’t been updated since 1996 and brings it into the 21st century.

More than 10 years after this program was established (In November 2008), the people of Maryland approved casino Slot machines.

A lot has happened since then with table games, more sites and more ways to gamble, so much that we bring in billions of dollars of revenue.

Additionally, more than 15 years after this section was last revised, the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future was passed with its insight on youth suicide.

However, the legislature hasn’t updated our *MD Youth Suicide Prevention School Program* since early 2008.

Therefore, this bill does two things:

- 1) It incorporates the Blueprint’s language on youth suicide into this program, and
- 2) It adds gambling addiction to the list of awareness that can contribute to youth suicide.

I worked with stakeholders on a clarifying amendment, which doesn’t change the intent of the bill. (Must → Should promote)

In Maryland we have the perfect storm for trouble for our youth.

We have suicide among our youth being too high, and we have gambling being more and more accessible every year.

There are studies showing gambling addiction can lead to youth suicide with increased pressures.

We also see our young adults ages 18-25 are the most likely age group to become addicted to gambling.

These are our High School graduates.

When I joined the General Assembly, we had the lottery and horse racing.

Today, we have expanded gambling all across the state including sports betting from our couches.

This bill is not mandating, but it's a small step to bring more awareness and recognition of the potential issues of youth gambling.

When it comes to gambling addiction, I believe prevention is so much better for Marylanders than millions in treatment after an addiction is created.

So, with that I will ask for your favorable consideration.