

Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 1012

Public Health – Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams – Authorization

Position: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the Mental Health Association of Frederick County (MHA), I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1012, authorizing counties and municipalities to establish Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams.

MHA's mission is building a strong foundation of emotional wellness by preparing resilient children, securing vulnerable families, facing crises together, and supporting the whole community. Suicide prevention is central to this work.

MHA provides services across the crisis continuum in Frederick County, ensuring there is someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go. We operate the 24-hour Call Center that answers 988, deploy Mobile Crisis Services to respond in the community, and provide in-person support through our Walk-in Behavioral Health Center. Through this work, we see firsthand the complexity of suicide risk and the importance of coordinated, data-informed prevention efforts.

Each loss to suicide represents not only an individual tragedy, but also an opportunity to better understand how systems and services can respond more effectively. House Bill 1012 would authorize counties to establish multidisciplinary, community-based suicide fatality review teams to examine trends, identify service gaps, and address systemic barriers unique to their communities.

The bill appropriately requires coordination with the State Suicide Fatality Review Committee, ensuring alignment with statewide prevention efforts while allowing flexibility to address local needs. Maryland has successfully used fatality review models in other public health areas, and extending this framework to suicide prevention is a logical and evidence-informed next step.

The confidentiality protections and exemptions from the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act are essential. Effective fatality review depends on candid, cross-system discussion of sensitive information. These safeguards allow teams to focus on learning and prevention rather than blame.

Authorizing local suicide fatality review teams will strengthen Maryland's suicide prevention infrastructure.

For these reasons, MHA respectfully urges a favorable vote on House Bill 1012.

Respectfully submitted,

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