



TESTIMONY TO THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB0468: Health and Taxation- Digital Social Media Services and the Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. In 1999 it adopted criteria to evaluate state revenue sources. One guideline measures compatibility of tax policy with social and environmental policy, to ensure that the state's policy and tax structure work towards the same ends, and not at cross purposes.

The League thus supports House Bill 468, which would use tax revenue collected from social media companies to provide funding for expanded youth behavioral health services via the Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth.

The need for increased behavioral health services for Maryland's youth is clear. The 2025 *Roadmap to Strengthen Maryland's Public Behavioral Health System for Children, Youth and Families*¹ notes that "As of 2023, nearly 15 percent of youth between the ages of 12 and 17 in Maryland reported suffering at least one major depressive episode," and that "close to half of [those] young people...with a major depressive episode did not receive any mental health services..."

The U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 Advisory on *Social Media and Youth Mental Health* noted that "Up to 95% of youth ages 13-17 report using a social media platform, with more than a third saying they use social media 'almost constantly.'"² And a CDC *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* notes that "**Frequent social media use was associated with a higher prevalence of: being bullied, feelings of sadness and hopelessness, and risk of suicide among students.**"³

Increased investment in child and adolescent behavioral health care is necessary to ensure that Maryland's youth can more easily access the affordable, timely, equitable, quality care to which they are entitled. This care includes early intervention, crisis management, and easier availability of essential in-home and community-based services. Utilizing taxes paid by social media companies, taking into account some of the well-documented harms often incurred by young Marylanders' use of these platforms, can help provide those necessary funds. **The League and its 2,000 members urge a favorable report on House Bill 468.**

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/bha/Documents/MDH%20BH%20Roadmap%20for%20Children%202025.pdf>

² <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/yrbs/results/2023-yrbs-results.html>