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HB 244 _Enagonio Liz_SUPPORT .

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB0244_ **Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education**. I am providing written testimony from a student at Towson University, who wishes to keep their identity private. I am the aunt of a Towson University student who obtained the story from a friend, and forwarded it to me by email.

The following is my experience at Towson's counseling center: I attempted to receive services from Towson's counseling center in the summer of 2017. To begin with, my counselor did not thoroughly explain their confidentiality policy to me. All of the therapists I've seen outside of a school counseling-center setting only have to make a report if they believe you or someone else is in immediate danger. At Towson's counseling center, and my current school's counseling center, a report has to be made even if someone mentions childhood abuse from their past. Because I was not thoroughly briefed on the policy, I shared something with the counselor that she stated she may have to report. This made me feel guilty for sharing. She did not end up having to report it, but the fact that she didn't brief me on their policies was not great.

I was referred out due to having "long-term" issues while the counseling center only serves students who have short-term issues. The referral consisted of her printing out an out-dated list of providers that I could have found myself on my insurance website - she had no working relationship with any of these providers. I was on medicaid at the time, so my options were limited, and I did not have a car. The only provider I could walk to was not a great fit for me, so I tried to meet with someone from the counseling center again, and hoped to meet with someone different. I was informed that I was not able to make an appointment at all due to the fact that I had been referred out. I tried to fight this by calling the therapist I met with. I remember crying on the phone and saying "I don't understand why I'm not being helped." She then finally gave me the email of her director. I emailed them about my experience and never heard back. I felt hopeless. I was only able to access treatment a year later, when I had a car and my insurance had changed.

Sharing this story is important to me because I know other students have had similar experiences. If they struggle with something beyond test anxiety, they are referred out, and many students cannot afford or access treatment outside of the counseling center - freshmen aren't even allowed cars on campus. I am a social work student at UMB currently, so I've given a lot of thought as to what could be better. First of all, I don't see why students like me couldn't receive some short-term services in order to bridge us as we find a good fit. I pay the same tuition and fees that other students do. I should be able to receive the same amount of sessions. Secondly, referral could have been a more involved process that involves having a working relationship with the providers students are referred to, and that involves consistent follow up to ensure a match. The counseling center could also refer students to free services in

the area, such as Pro Bono Counseling Project. Finally, it would have been helpful if the counseling center had group therapy specifically for students who had been referred out because of having "long-term" issues. The group could focus on basic coping skills and offer some support to students who cannot otherwise access treatment. Towson did have some free groups, but none of them were relevant to me.