

JOSELINE A. PEÑA-MELNYK

Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

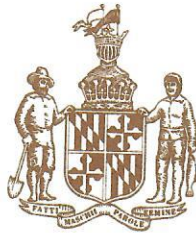
Vice Chair

Health and Government
Operations Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and
Long Term Care

Chair, Public Health and
Minority Health Disparities



The Maryland House of Delegates

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Annapolis Office

The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3502 • 301-858-3502
800-492-7122 Ext. 3502
Fax 410-841-3409 • 301-858-3409
Joseline.Pena.Melnyk@house.state.md.us

District Office

P. O. Box 1251
College Park, Maryland 20741-1251

House Bill 59 – Task Force on Higher Education Students with Chronic Health Conditions

Testimony of Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk (Favorable)

Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice Chairman Chang, and members of the Appropriations Committee, I am pleased to present House Bill (HB) 59, which would create a Task Force on Higher Education Students with Chronic Health Conditions.

For children with chronic health conditions, the support they rely upon in their formative years of Kindergarten through 12th grade evaporates once they graduate from high school and strive to attain a higher education degree. Managing chronic care is challenging. We need to ensure that students are able to complete their education while having their health needs met.

HB 59 would establish a task force to study the needs of young adults who have grown up with chronic conditions. The task force would identify potential solutions that would help this often forgotten group. With the support of the Maryland General Assembly, the task force would establish best practices for how higher education institutions may best support their students with chronic conditions.

With recommendations from the task force, we, as policymakers, will be better informed on how to create opportunities for these young adults.

During the 2018 session, the House unanimously voted in favor of, then, HB 1457 to establish a task force on higher education students with chronic conditions. We are asking for your support once again.

Now is an opportune time to start addressing the needs of this population. Every college student had their world turned upside down as COVID-19 spread throughout the country. They had to shift their lives around online classes, not knowing when they would return to their campuses. In the midst of this, they are aware that with their chronic condition they may be at increased risk of contracting and having severe symptoms of COVID-19.

It is crucial that universities and institutions have best practices for how to care for students with chronic conditions and support them in their educational ambitions.

The essence of the bill is this: every child deserves to grow up with the opportunity to reach their dreams. Young adulthood is the time for those dreams to become a reality. We owe it to these students to continue our support as they seek higher education and feel empowered to fulfill their childhood dreams.

Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 59. I respectfully request a favorable report.