



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdcSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Adelaide C. Eckardt

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: January 20, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 161 – *Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdcSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdcSWC, we **support with amendment** Senate Bill 161.

Senate Bill 161 establishes a Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education. The Task Force is charged with studying policies and procedures related to the treatment of mental illness in students and to review various practices and models for ensuring students can access mental health services. The Task Force is to make recommendations regarding a range of issues that will serve to enhance access and appropriate response to the mental health care service needs of higher education students by their institutions. An interim report from the Task Force is due December 1, 2021 with a final report due December 1, 2022.

A rising number of college students are seeking treatment at campus counseling centers for serious mental health problems. Higher Education institutions have noted increases in the incidence of anxiety disorders, crises requiring immediate response, psychiatric medication issues, and clinical depression. There has also been an increase in the number of students seeking services to deal with sexual assault and self-harming behaviors. The establishment of this Task Force will ensure that Maryland's higher education institutions will engage in a collaborative and thorough evaluation of the access to care in their institutions and the collective development of recommendations for enhanced access and provision of services.

Given the rise in mental health difficulties among students, it is crucial to have student voices on the Task Force to address obstacles they may have encountered in getting needed services, and to discuss what they see as the most important recommendation to improve services. MdcSWC would recommend that the appointments by the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland be expanded to include 2 students, or former students. In addition, the Task Force membership should include at least one licensed clinical social worker who is part of a campus mental health clinic, as clinical social workers provide a large portion of the psychotherapy to college and graduate students. With its amendments noted, MdcSWC urges a favorable report.

For more information call:

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