

Testimony before Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

****Support****

HB 377 – Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment

April 6, 2021

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports House Bill 377. We are appreciative of your interest in learning more about the mental health needs of the students in our public schools and how to best address them. We strongly support the passage of the bill to establish the Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment, so that the guidelines that define behavioral and mental health treatment in our schools reflect best practices and the most recent research.

As School Social Workers, we are the only professionals serving students in schools on a daily basis who are both Certificated by the Maryland State Department of Education as well as universally licensed to provide mental health treatment through Maryland’s Health Occupations Code. There are other MSDE-Certificated mental health professionals in schools, such as school counselors and school psychologists, who bring other valuable skills and expertise like college/career counseling and psychometric testing to support the growth and success of our students. These professions are appropriately reflected in the membership of the proposed Commission, but they are not all licensed to provide mental health treatment.

As experts in mental health treatment, we believe that a clinical social worker who has had experience in schools can offer valuable assistance to the Commission as the members address the charge that they are given through this legislation. Together, school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors collaborate to provide a multi-disciplinary approach that supports the unique needs of each child. Thank you for your support of our students and their needs through this legislation.

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