



March 26, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support – HB 461: Public Schools- Student Attendance- Excused Absence for Mental Health Needs

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS originally filed opposition to House Bill 461: Public Schools- Student Attendance- Excused Absence for Mental Health Needs (HB 461) for a variety of reasons. As amended, however, MPS and WPS **now support** HB 461. Specifically, the Societies appreciate the addition of a mental health professional following up with a student who takes a mental health absence. Such a practice will hopefully help prevent reinforcing school avoidant behaviors and either help to identify a problem and/or get the student into treatment if necessary.

MPS & WPS thanks the Sponsor and the House for the thoughtful amendments to the bill and ask the Committee for a favorable report. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Joint Legislative Action Committee