



Testimony before Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

****Support****

SB 161 – Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education

January 20, 2021

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports Senate Bill 161. We are appreciative of your interest in learning more about the mental health needs of the students in higher education 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 colleges and universities reflect best practices and the most recent research.

About one-third of U.S. college students had difficulty functioning in the last 12 months due to depression, and almost half said they felt overwhelming anxiety in the last year, according to the 2013 National College Health Assessment, which examined data from 125,000 students from more than 150 colleges and universities. One can imagine that these numbers have only increased due to the stress brought about by the COVID19 pandemic, virtual learning, racial injustice and the political turmoil of recent years.

Social Workers provide more mental health services in our country than any other profession. Licensed clinical social workers are also one of the primary providers of mental health services in Maryland’s institutions of higher learning. We know that the need for improved access and services to advance the mental health of our college students is essential to their academic success.

We ask for your support of SB 161.

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