

January 28, 2021

Dear Senator Augustine and fellow Senate committee members,

I am a Maryland resident with two children aged 13 and 16 and I **strongly OPPOSE HB132/SB 41- Mental and Emotional Disorders – Consent (Mental Health Initiative)**

Although the intention of this bill may have been good, especially when teens are suffering ever increasing mental health issues and coping with their lives being suspended during a pandemic. However, I do not believe this bill contributes to improved access for 12-year-old minor children. I certainly want all children to get the help that they need but removing parents from the equation is NOT the answer. Young children are at risk without their parents, plain and simple.

This bill raises serious legitimate questions along with risks and the potential for serious unintended consequences like the following:

- Who pays if a minor child accesses consultation, diagnosis, or treatment by a healthcare provider or clinic?
- Consenting to a diagnosis is very serious. Mental health diagnoses can follow a child for their entire life. Parent supervision is needed.
- Is the intention of this bill for schools to provide these services? Where else would a 12-year-old receive them without their parent? This does not seem wise after we just watched schools shut down all services for children for a minimum of an entire year.
- Minors cannot vet the professional that they see. What if they see a poor clinician who diagnoses/ labels them inappropriately? or abuses them? We just saw that the renowned physician to the girl's gymnastics teams was a serial abuser.
- What standardized tool will all providers use to assess which children are mature and capable of giving informed consent?

I urge every one of you to oppose SB41; this bill is not in the best interest of our children in our great state of Maryland. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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