



**HB 0132 Mental Health Access Initiative**

**HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Position: SUPPORT**

We, the board of directors of Annapolis Pride, support HB 0132, The Mental Health Access Initiative.

All students should feel safe in their school and safe when they need to seek help from trusted adults and counselors in that environment. The current restrictions on parental consent can cause serious doubts in young people trying to seek legitimate help.

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience discrimination, harassment and bullying. In a 2020 national survey by the Trevor Project, 40% of LGBTQ+ youth under the age of 25 seriously considered suicide in the previous twelve months. It was 48% for ages 13-17. That is nearly half of LGBTQ+ students in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

These are critical and vulnerable years for students. It is a time when they need to have a sense of safety and security when dealing with issues of depression, isolation, and self-doubt. It is at these times they need to know they have trusted adults that can help them learn to cope with the complex issues that they are struggling with.

The need for parental consent can often be a roadblock in seeking such help, especially if the students home situation is exactly what they are seeking counseling for.

This law would simply bring the access to mental health services in line with the already existing policy for addiction counseling, which does not require parental consent. It makes seeking help safer, before it is too late.

At Annapolis Pride it is our belief and our mission that schools should be a safe, healthy, and supportive environment so ALL students can thrive and succeed to the best of their ability and we believe that this law would help bring us closer to that goal.

We respectfully urge this committee to issue a **favorable report for HB 0132**.

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