

**HB132 Public Schools – Health – Mental and Emotional Disorders – Consent
(Mental Health Access Initiative)**

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

**HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
SUPPORT**

Our names are Olivia Le, Zachary McGrath, and Florence Tian, and we are students of Anne Arundel County and executive team members of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC). We are writing in support of HB132: Public Schools – Health – Mental and Emotional Disorders – Consent (Mental Health Access Initiative). This bill will lower the age of consent for consultation, diagnosis, and certain treatments for emotional and mental disorders by a health care provider or clinic from 16 to 12.

If passed, this bill will help foster a safe and effective learning environment for all students by allowing them to get the help they desperately and rightfully need. Mental health disorders are not something that only people older than 16 struggle with. These issues can strike people of any age and from any background, including younger students. The bill will ensure that these students no longer have to silently suffer with mental health disorders, barred from accessing the help they need. Processing and dealing with traumas and stressors will begin earlier, offering these children better standards of living sooner rather than later. Quality mental health help is especially significant in a pandemic, during which themes of depression and anxiety are more prevalent than ever.

CRASC's Platform outlines the following relevant stances:

- *CRASC supports the . . .* Implementation and availability of health services to students for confidential counseling, health education, and preventive measures (Plank IV, Clause A)
- *CRASC supports . . .* Programs and efforts to fight substance abuse; (Plank IV, Clause E)
- *CRASC supports . . .* The availability of tutoring and additional resources for all students (Plank III, Clause L)

Accordingly, CRASC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on HB132.

Respectfully Submitted,

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