

OPPOSED HB132 Health – Mental and Emotional Disorders – Consent (Mental Health Access Initiative

February 12, 2021

Dear Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am both a teacher and a parent and fully understand the struggles many families and young people face when dealing with mental health issues. It is heartbreaking when someone is unable to receive the help they need to overcome these terrible illnesses. However, lowering the age of when someone can seek medical services without consent of their parents is not the solution. When you look at research on the brain it's clear that younger children are simply not able to make the kinds of decisions for themselves.

A website page from The University of Rochester Medical Center says,

Good judgment isn't something they can excel in, at least not yet.

The rational part of a teen's brain isn't fully developed and won't be until age 25 or so.

In fact, recent research has found that adult and teen brains work differently. Adults think with the prefrontal cortex, the brain's rational part. This is the part of the brain that responds to situations with good judgment and an awareness of long-term consequences. Teens process information with the amygdala. This is the emotional part.

Source:

<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=3051#:~:text=Good%20judgment%20isn't%20something,cortex%2C%20the%20brain's%20rational%20part.>

Accessed: January 29, 2021

Lowering the age of when a child can seek their own services without parental involvement to 12 years old means they would be making life altering decisions independently with less than 50% of their brain's ability to make careful decisions. Certainly we should improve access to mental health services for our children but this bill is not the solution.

Please oppose this bill.

Sincerely,
Annette Nelson
2603 Terrapin Rd.
Silver Spring, MD 20906

**PLEASE OPPOSE BILL:
HB 132 Health – Mental and Emotional Disorders –
Consent (Mental Health Access Initiative)**

February 12, 2021

Dear Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the intent behind this bill. We should certainly work to make sure everyone who needs mental health services receives them. However, allowing children as young as 12 years old to consent to services without the support and knowledge of their parents is *not* a solution to this problem. Young children are simply not able to safely make medical decisions without their parents or guardians. I urge you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

Alicia Cacace
12511 Atherton Dr.
Silver Spring, MD 20906