

Love Maryland PAC Written Testimony for HB132

Good Afternoon, on behalf of the Love Maryland PAC, I write to oppose HB132- Minor Consent to Mental Health Diagnosis and Certain Treatment.

This bill, while well intentioned, puts minors at risk. Parents MUST be involved in a minor's health care, including mental health care, until the child reaches the age of legal consent. 12-year-olds are simply not capable of understanding the life long ramifications of some mental health diagnosis and they are not capable of navigating the complex health care system on their own. Period. Bad diagnoses feed the school-to-prison pipeline.

Additionally, there are mental health professionals that prey on minors. The case of Susan Polk is an excellent example of a life ruined by an unscrupulous therapist. And we have seen the young women of the US Olympic team be abused by a member of their health staff. Minors must be protected until they reach the age of majority. Please see this article for additional information on how to spot a bad therapist: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/warning-signs-of-bad-therapy/> Children are simply not savvy enough to understand when they are in a negative relationship with their therapist.

Racism still exists in the mental health community, and African American boys are much more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder that will have life long consequences than other children. We must protect our vulnerable BIPOC community.

Finally, who is paying for this? If it is the state, where is the fiscal note? If it is the parents, then we can not mandate that a parents' overstretched budget be spent without their knowledge or consent. They MUST be involved in helping their minor child find an in-network therapist and agreeing to the financial terms of treatment.

Thank you for your time and attention. We hope the attached flyer helps you to vote NO on SB41. It is a bad bill for Maryland's children.

Megan Montgomery

Chair, Love Maryland PAC

OPPOSE HB132/SB41



Prevent Unintended Harm to Maryland's Children

COST



Who pays the bill when a 12-year-old accesses consultation, diagnosis, or treatment without their parent or guardian?

TRANSPORTATION/ ACCESS

Where is a 12-year-old receiving services without a guardian to take them? How do they get there? Is the intention to make these school-based services? That is not a good direction to go, as we have just witnessed schools shut down for at least a year.



CONSENTING TO DIAGNOSIS/ RACISM



A mental health diagnosis can follow a child for their entire life. Parent supervision is needed. Research shows that African American boys are more likely to receive diagnoses than their white peers. What standardized tool will all practitioners use to assess which children are "capable of giving informed consent"?

CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE

A 12-year-old cannot distinguish between a good practitioner and a poor one. Recent events, like the story of Larry Nassar, a trusted elite gymnastics team doctor who was a serial abuser, highlight the potential for a child to be harmed by another adult when parents are not involved.



REMOVING PARENTS IS NOT THE ANSWER

The intention of this bill is good. Especially in this time, when teens are suffering ever increasing mental health issues and are coping with their lives being suspended during a pandemic, we want all children to get the help that they need. We do not believe this bill contributes to improved access to mental health for 12-year-old/ minor children. It ONLY removes parents from the equation.