



February 3, 2021

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support with Amendments – HB377 Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment

Dear Chairman Kaiser and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS support HB 377: Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment (HB 377) as a group focused on studying, evaluating, updating, and revising guidelines for student behavioral health and mental health treatment and practices, in general, is warranted here in Maryland. MPS and WPS ask the Committee to reconsider the commission's composition as it lacks a physician, and more importantly, a psychiatrist.

As you are aware, psychiatrists are physicians first. As such, they can assist other commission members with invaluable clinical insight as to mental illness as well as the associated symptoms, such as unusual or disturbing thoughts, moods, and/or behaviors. Furthermore, a psychiatrist member of the commission could also provide invaluable insight into somatic symptoms that can manifest themselves as mental illness.

MPS and WPS, therefore, ask for the following amendment to HB 377:

On page 2, in line 14 strike "and"; on the same page, in line 16 after "Psychologists" insert "AND"; in the next line insert, "(VIII) ONE PHYSICIAN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY."

With the amendment mentioned above adopted, MPS and WPS would then ask the committee for a favorable report of HB 377. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Joint Legislative Action Committee