



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The Mdcswc, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: February 3, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 461 – *Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Mental Health Needs*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (Mdcswc), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of Mdcswc, we **support** House Bill 461.

House Bill 461 provides that absences from school for mental health needs are lawful absences and requires that a County Board of Education recognize at least 1 absence per quarter of each school year for a student's mental health needs and prohibits the requirement of a physician's written excuse for those absences. The increase in the incidences of mental health issues in children, particularly adolescents, is well-documented. Addressing these needs requires a broad range of services but also must recognize that even if not severe, a mental health issue in a child may make school attendance challenging and not in the child's best interest on a given day. House Bill 461 provides some flexibility in attendance policy to recognize the need for time off without a requirement to document that need by a physician. It is a small change in policy with the potential to help those students experiencing mental health issues, as well as their parents or guardians, relieve one point of stress. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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