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**House Bill 1224 Public Schools - Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based Health Centers and Public Schools - Parental Notice**

Health and Government Operations Committee

March 14, 2023

**Position: OPPOSE**

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in strong opposition of House Bill 1224.

Maryland youth continue to face a mental health crisis which has only been exasperated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Approximately 1 out of 5 Maryland teens have seriously considered attempting suicide, 36% of Maryland high school students have felt sad or hopeless every day for two weeks in a row, and Black students (52%) and LGBT students (75%) have felt significantly sadder and more hopeless compared to the statewide average. Access to safe, trustworthy, and protected behavioral health services is fundamental to supporting our students during this crisis.

Confidential care for adolescents has been shown to increase the likelihood that they will discuss behavioral health concerns like depression or anxiety, can offer a safe place to discuss issues of sexuality or gender identity, or report instances of abuse or harm. Maryland has already established a young person's right and ability to consent to behavioral health care. This bill undermines that right, compromises the trust of our skilled behavioral health providers, and ultimately would prevent us from addressing the needs of our youth. We would urge this committee to vote unfavorably on HB1224.

*For more information contact:*

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