



Maryland Independent College
and University Association

Support with Amendments

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Senate Bill 263 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee - Establishment

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On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 56,000 students we serve, we thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of support with amendments regarding [Senate Bill 263 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee - Establishment](#). We applaud the sponsor's leadership in identifying student mental health as a priority issue and in convening subject matter experts and key stakeholders to review policies, procedures, and best practices and models for providing high quality and accessible mental health care on college campuses. This Advisory Committee will make recommendations in areas including: the reduction of costs and barriers to providing access to mental health care to college students; the use of telemedicine, video conferencing, and hotlines; and the implementation of both general and specialized mental health counseling services.

MICUA member institutions offer a wide array of services to support and promote student mental health, emotional growth, and well-being. Counseling and wellness center structures and services vary across individual campuses but typically include: individual counseling, group counseling, on-call crisis services, outreach and consultation, programs and workshops, and referral to off-campus providers for specialized or longer term care. A wide range of resources are available to students who are facing either acute or ongoing mental health challenges and who are dealing with issues related to depression, anxiety, relationship problems, substance abuse, eating or body image concerns, academic challenges, social pressures, loss, and many other situations common for college students. Campuses also provide psychoeducational workshops, outreach, and programming on a variety of topics related to mental health and wellness, as well as training and consultation for faculty, staff, and student staff (such as resident assistants) for identifying and helping students who are in crisis.

MICUA appreciates being included in the membership of the Advisory Committee and offers the following potential amendments to the Committee. We encourage including an additional psychologist given their prominent presence in counseling centers and broadening the scope of workforce shortage areas due to the increased challenges to recruit and retain staff on college

campuses who receive other more attractive career opportunities. The workforce challenges in mental health are apparent given there is legislation introduced to attract individuals to the field as observed in [SB 283 – Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established](#). In addition, we are hopeful that the recommendations of the Advisory Committee would not be so prescriptive as to be contrary to individualized student support or to lead to unfunded mandates. Mental health services are not one-size-fits-all; rather, they are complex and require flexibility in the delivery of support services on college campuses.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about any of the information contained within this letter, please contact Irnande Altema (ialtema@micua.org), Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs.

MICUA appreciates the opportunity to share these comments and looks forward to working with the Committee to assist in charting a course that best serves students and their mental health needs.