

Mental Health Matters

June 9, 2020

FY 2021 Operating Budget: Funding for School-Based Mental Health Services

Position: Support

Dear Board of Education Members,

We, the undersigned organizations, believe strongly that mental wellness is critical to student success. Yet, too often, children and youth cannot get mental health treatment when they need it.

We understand that these are challenging times, fiscally and otherwise, for all of us – but we are reminded of what we share in common. All of us are deeply concerned for the health and wellbeing of our loved ones and our community. In times like these, we learned the best way for us to deal with fear and uncertainty is to lean in and take action. There is no time like the present to ensure our children have the appropriate mental health supports through HCPSS now more than ever.

Over the past year, a program jointly funded by the school system and the Horizon Foundation has significantly expanded mental health services in 30 schools. This program, which has already provided personalized help to hundreds of students, makes it easier for students to access services, including one-on-one counseling, during the school day.

We urge you to protect mental health funding for this pilot and to make sure this program is evaluated so that we can continue to better serve the mental health needs of students. At a time when COVID-19 has brought significant disruptions and changes to our children's lives, it is imperative that we protect this funding in the FY2021 operating budget to ensure these services will continue. In addition to the pilot, children need a full range of school-based mental health services, especially now, whether offered in person or virtually and additional teacher training and supports may be necessary to deal with the social and emotional impacts of these trying times.

Across the nation and locally, school systems are recognizing the major opportunity they have to support students' mental health. In fact, 70-80 percent of students receiving mental health services access them in the school setting. Lack of access to mental health services, along with negative stigma, have prevented many students and their families from finding the support they need. Protecting the mental health pilot program and offering a full range of school-based mental health services will better position HCPSS to support students now and expand this program into the future.

Mental health matters, and our children matter. Please continue to fund this program and continue to prioritize mental health and wellness so that every child can thrive and succeed both in and out of the classroom.

Sincerely,

Accessible Resources for Independence,
Incorporated
Association of Community Services of
Howard County
Bollman Bridge PTA
Bonnie Branch Middle School
Bonnie Branch Middle School PTA
CELEBRATION CHURCH at Columbia
Center for Creative Life and Learning, Inc.
Chase Brexton Health Care
Chinese American Parent Association of
Howard County
Clemens Crossing PTA
Conexiones, Inc.
Ed Lally Foundation
Girls on the Run of Central Maryland, Inc.
Ginomai Life Coaching
GovRealm, LLC
HC DrugFree
HC Housing Unit
Horizon Foundation
Howard County Autism Society
Howard County Chinese School
Howard County Citizens Association
Howard County Dads Inc
Howard High School Alpha Achievers
Indian Cultural Association of Howard
County
ItsReallyReal
L3M Global
Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Center, Inc.

LeCheval Stable and Counseling
Marriotts Ridge High School PTSA
Mayfield Woods Middle School PTA
MD Coalition of Families
My Life Foundation
MPB Group, Inc.
NAMI Howard County
New Lens Counseling
Nirmalnagar Prantik Samaj Unnayan samity
Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland
Oakland Mills High School
On Our Own of Maryland, Inc.
One World Healthcare
Oneness CSL Columbia
Patapsco Middle School PTA
PATH
Pearl Foundation, Inc.
Peiyong Chinese School
Root Studio
Saint James United Methodist Church
Senator Guy Guzzone
Temple Isaiah Sisterhood
The People's Voice
The Therapeutic and Recreational Riding Center
Therapeutic Connections
TIME Organization
Top Virtual Staffing Solutions, LLC
Town Center Community Association
Upcycled, Inc.
Vheda Health