

HB 341 – Maryland Commission for Boys' and Men's Health - Establishment

House Health Committee

February 10, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) 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 (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HB 341.

HB 341 would establish a commission to reduce negative health outcomes for boys and men, including developing policies and programs to improve behavioral and physical health and raising public awareness.

Data from 2022-23 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows that across health indicators, high school boys fare much worse than their female peers.

- Boys were twice as likely to have never seen a dentist
- Boys had a worse diet
- Three times more boys than girls reported that they were a daily smoker.¹

Of particular concern is that rates of substance use are much higher among boys, and boys have much higher suicide rates than their female counterparts.

- Across all substances except marijuana, substance use was about two times higher among boys than girls
- Twice as many boys reported drinking and driving
- Boys were two and one-half times more likely to have engaged in gambling
- While girls had much higher rates of reported depression and suicide attempts, three times more boys than girls die by suicide in Maryland.²

These health disparities between boys and girls continue into adulthood.

¹ Maryland Department of Health releases 2022-2023 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey data. Maryland Department of Health. June 25, 2024.

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdp/Reports/Pages/YRBS-2022-2023.aspx>

² United Health Foundation. America's Health Rankings 2021-23.

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/teen_suicide/MD

There have been many various efforts over the last decade to decrease mental health stigma. Despite this, males remain much less likely than females to report feeling depressed and to seek help if they are depressed. Untreated depression can lead to suicide.

Similarly, while numerous substance use prevention programs have been put into place, as well as campaigns to reduce drinking and driving, men continue to engage in substance misuse at much higher rates than women. Men account for around 80% of arrests for drunk driving,³ and in 2025 in Maryland, 403 men died of an opioid overdose compared to 160 women.⁴

We clearly need new ideas to better address the behavioral health needs of boys and men. Establishing a commission to focus on this and other health issues would be a good start. By gathering data, studying research and new programs, and collaborating with various partners across the state, this commission could move the needle and improve the physical and behavioral health of boys and men in Maryland.

For these reasons, MHAMD supports HB 341 and urges a favorable report.

³ Drunk Driving Stats.org. <http://www.drunkdrivingstats.org/menversuswomendrunkdrivingstatistics.html>

⁴ Maryland Department of Health. Interactive Data Dashboard.

<https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx>