

**Bill 468 – Health and Taxation – Digital Social Media Services and the
Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth**

House Ways and Means Committee

February 12, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT

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 468.

HB 468 would establish a Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth to improve access to behavioral health care, by imposing a tax on the revenues of digital social media services.

The need for mental health care that addresses the unique needs of young Marylanders has never been greater. In the 10 years leading up to the COVID pandemic, depression increased by about 40% in young people,¹ and these mental health challenges increased dramatically in the wake of the pandemic. Data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 2022-23 shows that 28% of Maryland high school students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always, and 24% of middle school students reported that they had seriously considered suicide.²

Many point to social media as a contributing factor to this disturbing trend. There is a growing body of research that indicates that social media can have a profound risk of harm to the mental health of young people. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, “social media platforms are often designed to maximize user engagement, which has the potential to encourage excessive use and behavioral dysregulation.” Social media use by youth is nearly universal. Up to 95% of youth ages 13–17 report using a social media platform, with more than a third saying they use social media “almost constantly.”³ It makes sense to impose a tax on social media services to address the worsening mental health of Maryland’s youth.

MHAMD proposes an amendment to the bill that would direct any funds collected from the tax to the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, established by the Blueprint legislation to provide behavioral health services to students, instead of creating an entirely new fund and administrative structure to manage the fund.

Over the last several years, investments in student behavioral health by the Consortium have shown outstanding results. In the 2024-25 school year, Consortium-funded programs served more than

¹ Kids’ mental health is in crisis. Here’s what psychologists are doing to help. American Academy of Pediatrics. January 1, 2023. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/01/trends-improving-youth-mental-health>

² 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/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS-2022-2023.aspx>

³ U.S. Surgeon General. Social Media and Mental Health. 2023. Accessed February 12, 2024.

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf>

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137,000 students in 86% of Maryland's schools. 705 new behavioral health workforce members were hired, and 6,000 school staff were trained in behavioral health practices. Students demonstrated significant improvement across all three levels of intervention – preventative, targeted, and intensive, and almost 90% of students and families reported satisfaction with the behavioral health services received.⁴

Since its establishment, funding for the Consortium has been at risk. In 2025, the BRFA proposed cutting funding from \$120 million per year to \$40 million per year. The General Assembly was able to restore some dollars and fund the Consortium at a level of \$100 million/year. This year the BRFA again proposes cutting funding, this time by \$20 million/year. Without a sustainable funding mechanism, programs will remain at risk of shutting down and investments made thus far lost, to the detriment of Maryland's students.

Because of the dramatic need for school-based behavioral health services and the extraordinary impact of Consortium grants, it is critical that there be a dedicated funding stream for the Consortium. The dollars that HB 468, as amended, could bring to the fund are urgently needed, therefore we urge a favorable report.

⁴ Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports Statewide Impact Report, July – September 2025. https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Documents/001%20-%20Holding%20Folder%20for%20Documents/2025%20Documents/12%20-%20December/Year%201%20Statewide%20Consortium%20Impact.FINAL_Acc.pdf