

Charpentier SB 374

To The Public Health Committee of the General Assembly,

I am writing to you today to vote down Bill 374. We can all agree that we all want to provide adequate mental health care to both children and adults who are in need of it, however I believe that lack of assessment is not the issue at hand. The problem lies within the existing system.

Under the "Child Find" provision of IDEA and state special education statutes, local boards of education are already required to identify and assess all children, as stated on the Child Find IDEA web site,

"requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth to 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services."

So more assessment is not the issue. The current system is not working adequately, so why would we throw even more children, in fact, every school aged child into it and stress it further. What we need to do is to analyze the existing laws and determine which are effective, and which need to be adjusted, to better serve our children in the community.

I also have many other concerns about this bill, some of which include the failure to define exactly who will be doing assessments, who will have access to these evaluations, how an appellate process would be carried out if there was any objection to the assessment, and how will these evaluations will be paid for, as we all know the budget is stretched beyond it's limit as it is.

In conclusion, I ask that you would work on improving the current law rather than adding yet another layer of red tape and paperwork, thus overloading the system, both financially and administratively, with unnecessary assessments, and rather focus the taxpayers money on helping those children who are actually in need of these services.

Sincerely,

Patricia Charpentier