



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 1, 2019

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Ann C. Fisher, Chairperson
GACEC

RE: House Bill No. 100 Mental Health Units for High-Risk K-5 Schools

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed House Bill No. 100, which will establish mental health services units for Delaware elementary schools. Council endorses the bill and would like to share the following observations.

Enabling children to access these services in their school without their parents needing to make separate arrangements for appointments and transportation would likely increase the likelihood of a child accessing some form of treatment. Early intervention and access to care are always to be commended; however, Council is concerned that there may not be enough clinicians with the right training and certifications to fill the roles created by the bill. Also, in reviewing the individuals listed to provide services, Council would request the addition of licensed professional counselor of mental health as an eligible provider.

Across the nation, shortages have been reported in the fields of psychiatry, psychology and social work. Delaware faces particular challenges because there is no in-state medical school, and large parts of the state are very rural. Furthermore, following the passage of House Bill 311 in the 149th General Assembly, as of June 2019 Delaware will require that all licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs) have a master's degree in social work or an approved doctoral degree, and will institute licensing requirements for all social workers practicing in Delaware, both clinical and non-clinical. See 24 Del. C. § 3901, et seq. While these changes were intended to improve quality and accountability in the practice of social work, they may decrease the number of social workers eligible for the positions created by this bill.

In addition, it is essential that there is good coordination between all providers in order to maximize the resources available and serve as many students as possible. This is especially critical since there may be both additional school staff hired through the allocation of mental health units and other efforts on the part of state agencies occurring in the same buildings or districts.

Finally, Council suggests one technical correction. The word “from” should be deleted on line 89.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our endorsement and comments. Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss at the GACEC office should you have any questions.