



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

DATE: March 21, 2022

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Terri Hancharick, Vice Chairperson
GACEC

RE: **House Bill No. 301 Statewide School Mental Health Education Programs**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed **House Bill No. 301**, which would require "The Department of Education [to] establish and implement statewide mental health educational programs for each grade [K-12] in each school district and charter school in this State." Council **supports** the proposed legislation. We would also like to share the following observations.

Council applauds the motivation behind this legislation but has concerns that the educational programming could end up being stigmatizing if not structured appropriately. For example, many people equate disabilities with illness/absence of health. Speaking of "physical health" may be misconstrued to mean absence of disability.

It is admirable that the legislation does require the Department of Education to "consult with mental health experts, including individuals with the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, Mental Health Association of Delaware, Delaware Guidance Services, National Alliance of Mental Illness Delaware, and National Council for Behavioral Health." The act also empowers the Department of Education to "adopt regulations to implement and enforce this section."

Council would like to recommend legislative language be added to specify that the educational programming must be research-based and evidence-based.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our support of this proposed legislation. Please feel free to contact Pam Weir or me at the GACEC office should you have any questions on our comments.