



**HB771 Public Schools - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Surveys - Revisions**  
 Presented to the Honorable Anne Kaiser and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee  
 February 12, 2021 1:30pm

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges members of the House Ways and Means Committee a favorable report on **HB771 Public Schools - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Surveys - Revisions**, sponsored by Delegate Pam Queen.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As such, we support programs and institutions aimed at providing individuals with the knowledge and power they need to make more informed healthcare decisions and we encourage the promotion of sound methodology in data collection to support evidence-based healthcare policies.

Considering that adolescence is often cited as a time of great upheaval due to social, emotional, cognitive, and physical changes in development, the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control’s Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey & Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS) was developed in 1990 to monitor priority health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. These behaviors are often established during childhood and early adolescence. The survey helps school districts and schools, communities, and public and private organizations understand and meet the needs of Maryland youth. These groups use YRBS/YTS data to develop school health policies and programs and promote positive health outcomes.

**Alcohol, Marijuana, and Other Drugs**



<i>2016 Youth Alcohol/Drug Use</i>		
	High School	Middle School
Alcohol *	25.5%	9.1%
Marijuana*	18.4%	5.5%
Cocaine**	5.4%	4.2%
Prescription Drug Use**	13.7%	4.9%
Heroin**	4.3%	4.2%
Injected Illegal Drugs**	3.8%	N/A

\*\*Current\* use (one or more days out of past 30 days)  
 \*\* \*Ever\* use

**Trends 2014-2016\***

**Favorable Trends**

- Decreased cigar, cigarette, ESD use
- Decreased intake of sodas

**Unfavorable Trends**

- Increased violent behavior
- Increased mental health issues (suicide and depression)
- Decreased consumption of healthy food

\*Based on trend analyses using a logistic regression model controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade, p < 0.05

The survey randomly selects schools to participate based on student population and number of schools in jurisdiction. The survey is anonymous and student information  
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is protected. Bill HB771 requires the Department to utilize passive parental consent before administering the survey. Participation in the YRBS/YTS survey is encouraged; however, parents have two opportunities to opt-out. Parents or guardians that prefer to exempt their children from taking the survey are allowed to do so. HB771 requires the Department to include in the survey all tiers and questions in the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Positive Childhood Experiences.

The information above reveals worrisome trends for youth in our state. While some negative factors have decreased, there is increased violent behavior, mental health issues and decreased consumption of healthy food. One out of every seven Maryland high school students has made a plan about how they would attempt suicide and one out of every four Maryland middle school students felt sad or hopeless for  $\geq 2$  weeks in a row (to the extent that they stopped doing some usual activities at any point during the 12 months prior to survey administration). The survey also revealed that 38% of high school and 42.7% middle school students report playing video or computer games for 3 hours or more on an average school day.

Studies have shown that there are associations between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and risks for adult depression, poor mental health, and insufficient social and emotional support have been documented. It is therefore key to monitor key data on adverse childhood experiences and mental health to assess recent trend and possible responses and policies. State public policy programs can use ACE Study data to identify youth who may be at higher risk of adolescent pregnancy. This can be done by using their ACE score and targeting programming to youth. Recent HIV research suggested that ACEs were positively associated with HIV risk behaviors overall, but the associations differed between males and females. For males, the odds of HIV risk increased at a significant level as long as they experienced one ACE, whereas for females, the odds did not increase until they experienced three or more ACEs.

Just like any other public health issue, more research is needed to understand and ultimately reduce risk behaviors, and the passage of HB771 will do just that. Indeed, the health and well-being of our state's youth depend on it. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a **favorable report on HB0771**. Thank you for your consideration.

- I LinFangaDeng-MinChuang-YookyongLeeb. 2016. "Adverse childhood experiences, gender, and HIV risk behaviors: Results from a population-based sample." (Science Direct ).
- II MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, and ICF, Inc. 2018. "2018 YRBS/YTS Coordinator Training." MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, and ICF, Inc., Maryland .
- III Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. 2021. <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/yrbs/default.aspx>. Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Feb 7.
- IV Services, US Department of Health and Human. n.d. "Control, Youth Engagement in Tobacco Prevention ." US Department of Health and Human Services