

March 12, 2026

Dear Rep. Berbeco,

My name is Jafari Munyugu. I have been a student at Winooski High School for about 7 years now. I am a junior now. I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed bill H.817 to establish a mental health and substance use disorder literacy curriculum in our schools. As a high school student, I have had to deal with a lot as a student, but also as a developing teen. I have witnessed firsthand the impacts of mental health on my peers and myself, but most importantly, I have seen the impact of support through those hard times that we have not yet.

Being a high school student is super challenging itself but the pressure to keep the school life balance and still be able to address challenges from home is almost impossible for some. Not long ago, I was feeling that pressure and some may address it the wrong way, using things that give instant gratification such as vapes or other items with chemicals that send a quick dopamine to escape from the pressure and stress. I have seen my peers and friends turn to things like vaping to help them with the stress. But that's not the right way but many don't know the risk before it is too late. I am hopeful that this bill will be a learning opportunity so kids can learn more about mental health and will learn the right thing to do when they are stressed.

Teachers can help before it's too late for those students. My dad often says, "teachers are the fathers and mothers of your children when they are at school." But I can imagine that this is a hard job for teachers. This bill would hopefully help teachers know what to do. Sometimes, teachers do notice that there is something wrong with a student, but they aren't able to do anything about it because of lack of training. I think that this bill would help teachers have more training so they can better support students like myself.

I think it is important for your committee to remember your own children when you are making decisions about what's best for other people's children. Kids deserve mental health support in school if you want them to be able to become their best self. That is what you would want for your child.

Thank you for your time,

Jafari Munyugu

Proud Winooski High School student, age 16