

July 26th, 2022

***Bhutila Karpoche, M.P.P.***

Room 204  
North Wing, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A5

***Hon. Sylvia Jones, M.P.P.***

Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
Ministry of Health  
5th Floor  
777 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

***Hon. Michael A. Tibollo, M.P.P.***

Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
Ministry of Health, Frost Building South  
6th Floor  
7 Queen's Park Cres  
Toronto, ON M7Z 1Y7

**RE: Open Letter Calling on The Introduction of Legislation to Guarantee The Timely Access to Mental Health and Addiction Care for Ontario's Youth**

Dear Bhutila Karpoche, Minister Sylvia Jones, and Associate Minister Michael A. Tibollo,

On behalf of Ontario's youth, including 140,000+ post-secondary students that we collectively represent as student leaders; we are writing to you today to draw attention to the pressing mental health crisis at Ontario's Universities and the urgent need to improve relevant services.. *We are calling for the introduction of provincial legislation to guarantee the timely provision of mental health and addiction support services to Ontario's youth.* A similar Private Member's bill was brought forward in the 42nd legislative assembly of Ontario, however, it was unfortunately terminated due to the dissolution of parliament for elections. The bill, formally introduced to the legislature by MPP Bhutila Karpoche, established that any individual under 26 years of age that has been deemed to require mental health or addiction treatment would receive appropriate support and care within 30 days of referral to such services.

During this time of heightened economic and global uncertainty, we have seen a striking increase in the number of students seeking mental health treatment and support. These recent developments only compound the preexisting growth in the proportion of youth with perceived needs for mental health care seen in prior years. A cross-sectional analysis of post-secondary student populations by the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) survey in 2018 [found](#) that 52% of students reported feeling depressed and 69% experiencing anxiety, a significant increase from previous estimates of 37% and 56% [reported](#) in 2013, respectively. The increased number of youth in need of appropriate treatment

services has subsequently increased wait times within the Province. A report from the Canadian Mental Health Association found a [130% increase](#) in the number of children and youth waiting for support in 2020 compared to 2017. This same report also found that average province-wide wait times range from 67 to 92 days depending on the type of service required, and in some cases can be as long as 2.5 years.

In all, the COVID-19 pandemic, *and the ensuing mental health epidemic*, have further exposed gaps in mental health service delivery across Ontario. With youth currently being more likely to experience [mental health concerns](#) and [substance use disorders](#) compared to any other age group in Canada, it is imperative that appropriate resources are allocated to ensure the timely, effective, and equitable provision of treatment services. Legislating an upper limit on the amount of time children and youth have to wait until they receive mental health and addiction support will ensure they receive appropriate care when they need it most, and will encourage improvements in service delivery across the province.

Sincerely,

University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU)  
Alma Mater Society | Queen's University Student Government (AMS)  
University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU)  
University of Toronto Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU)  
Syndicat étudiant de l'Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa Students' Union  
McMaster Students' Union (MSU)  
Toronto Metropolitan University Students' Union (TMUSU)

