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February 26, 2020

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Patricia F. O'Connor, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: House Bill 1121 (Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System): Support

The Office of the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) supports House Bill 1121 because the bill would address the chronic lack of reliable information about mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) services and providers throughout Maryland for consumers, referring providers, and carriers. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (the Exchange) would create a searchable inventory of any program and provider of MH/SUD services, including inpatient, crisis, and outpatient services. Any provider could access the registry in order to electronically refer patients for services.

The registry and referral system would fill a gap that, according to carriers, has hindered their network recruitment efforts for these programs and providers, and has been a cause of network inadequacy. Additionally, the HEAU receives inquiries relating to the availability of such services, and believes consumer access to the registry would benefit all consumers, but in particular children requiring the services, and their parents or guardians. To the extent the registry ultimately does not contain a sufficient number of providers and programs to meet current demand, there would be a specific basis for some of the policy initiatives discussed at the interim network adequacy workgroup meetings, e.g., Delegate Cullison's suggestions about education and training incentives for pediatric service providers. We urge the committee to give the bill a favorable report.

cc: Delegate Pena-Melnyk, Sponsor
Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee