



## **SB 454 – Public Safety – Mandatory Mental Health Training – First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers**

**Committee: Judicial Proceedings**

**Date: February 13, 2020**

**POSITION: Support**

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for someone with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to parents and caregivers of young people with mental health issues and to any loved one who cares for someone with a substance use or gambling issue.

---

MCF strongly supports SB 454.

First responders and law enforcement officers frequently respond when an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis. For these reasons both need solid training in mental health.

Too often first responders or law enforcement officers are ill-equipped to provide adequate assistance when an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis. While some may have received training in de-escalation techniques, they lack the knowledge to help connect individuals with mental illness to mental health services. This is a lost opportunity.

When children are experiencing a crisis, such as out-of-control or aggressive behavior, families frequently call 911. Instead of seeing the scene as an incident of “bad behavior,” it would be tremendously beneficial if first responders or law enforcement officers could help to identify the signs of a mental illness. For example, out-of-control or aggressive behavior is often a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. Equipped with knowledge about the signs of mental illness, and how to connect individuals to mental health services, families could be supported to seek help for their child.

Outside of crisis situations too, first responders and law enforcement officers should possess mental health literacy. They have the opportunity to intervene in people’s lives even when an individual is not experiencing a crisis. SB 454 would go a long way toward improving the lives of people with mental illness.

We urge a favorable report on SB 454.

**Contact: Ann Geddes**  
**Director of Public Policy**  
**The Maryland Coalition of Families**  
**10632 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 234**  
**Columbia, Maryland 21044**  
**Phone: 443-741-8668**  
**[ageddes@mdcoalition.org](mailto:ageddes@mdcoalition.org)**