



February 17, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
House Ways & Means Committee
House Office Building – Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – HB 766: Children – Residential Treatment Centers – Education Funding

Dear Chairman Kelley and Honorable Members of the Committees:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPW/WPS supports House Bill 766: Children – Residential Treatment Centers – Education Funding (HB 766). Ensuring means for covering educational costs for children in need of residential treatment centers (RTCs) care is critically important. Currently, coverage of educational expenses serves as a significant barrier to admission into an RTC for many. Lead agencies, namely the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), often have to be involved to ensure that educational costs are covered. As a result, children who do not have involvement from either of these agencies but require RTC care face additional hurdles to access treatment.

Currently, the means of doing so is requesting that parents/guardians pursue a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) to place their children in the care of DSS to facilitate admission. However, executing a VPA is challenging and intimidating for parents, and the process is often prolonged, leading to long delays in possible admission. If coverage of education costs is guaranteed, this hurdle would be eliminated, resulting in easier access to care.

MPS/WPS, therefore, ask this committee for a favorable report on HB 766.

If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee