



February 17, 2022

House Bill 513

**Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established
Ways and Means Committee**

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

On behalf of the provider community in Maryland, we would like to thank you for your attention to the critical issue facing children and families in Maryland today; and we fully support the efforts brought forward in House Bill 513. This legislation would establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development to promote positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children by providing certain referrals and services for children, families, teachers, and caregivers; and generally relating to the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program.

Mental health consultation is also a prevention-based service in two ways. First it helps teachers and home visitors and parents recognize early signs of behavioral or developmental issues and helps them figure out what's going on and how to prevent those issues from escalating. So that's prevention. And then the second aspect of prevention is when we know that someone is at higher risk for experiencing problems and we intervene to give them supports in order to prevent those negative outcomes. Recognizing the importance of addressing the needs of children facing developmental, social, emotional, or behavioral health issues through The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program will help teachers and families learn how to handle these challenges, supporting positive behaviors building critical foundations for children to be successful in life.

It is for these aforementioned reasons, that we politely ask for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 513. Thank you.

For more information call or email:

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