



HB 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established

Committee: Ways and Means

Date: February 17, 2022

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for a loved one with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a child, youth or adult with a mental health, substance use or gambling issue.

MCF strongly supports HB 513.

HB 513 would expand and permanently establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot Project, to promote positive mental health and behavioral health in very young children. Too often our organization is providing assistance to families with children with significant and complex mental health needs. Many of these children would not have come to this point if there had been enough services for them as infants and toddlers. Children with significant and complex mental health needs are those we find stuck in emergency departments and hospital inpatient units, lingering in residential treatment centers, and failing in school and at great risk of dropping out. If you don't pay now, you end up paying later.

Maryland is sorely lacking in early childhood mental health services. HB 513 would begin to fill this gap. Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants build strong relationships with families, programs, and teachers to prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the impact of mental health problems among children. The current pilot project has met with great success, and must be expanded and made permanent.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report on HB 513.

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