

**Testimony Concerning HB 513**  
**“Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established”**  
**Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee**  
**February 17, 2022**

**Position: Favorable**

Thank you for your time today. My name is Allyson Nelson from Silver Spring. I am the parent of three children- currently 4, 6 and 8. I am speaking today in favor of house bill 513.

I had the pleasure of working with the **Infants and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program** within Montgomery County, when my son was four years old. I believe the early and hands-on support is instrumental in how well he is doing now. He is currently a third grader, with a group of great friends and thriving academically.

There are many reasons that working with an **early childhood mental health professional** improved our outcome. One of the main reasons is that the professional worked with **the school, the teachers, and our family**. She was able to observe the classroom on many occasions to get a real sense of the support that our son and family needed. She was also able to give the teachers the tools that they needed in order to help support my son. Additionally, all of the other children were able to benefit from the skills that she taught the teachers.

We found the cooperative approach to this program to be amazing. My son’s challenges are not “typical” challenges that would normally receive help in the classroom. He has sensory processing disorder, which means he is constantly looking for sensory stimulation. For him, that meant having a hard time sitting and focusing, as well as sucking on two of his fingers on a regular basis. He wouldn’t benefit from Physical Therapy or Speech, etc. This is where a mental health professional comes in. They are able to understand that his challenges have a mental health component to them. Without the information and tools that our professional provided my family with, I don’t believe I would have known to do anything.

Based on the above information, we have been able to successfully advocate for our son. We began working with both a developmental pediatrician and an occupational therapist. Along with them and the training that his Pre-K teachers received, he made a great transition to Kindergarten, and has continued making great strides.

In my family’s personal situation, this program made a huge impact. Being able to collaboratively work closely with a specialist, while my child was still young, was amazing.

HB 513 would expand the funding for the program to help meet the vast unmet needs of children, families, and child care providers across the state. For this reason, we urge your favorable consideration.

Thank you-

Allyson Nelson

Parent of 3 (ages 4, 6 and 8)

Silver Spring, Maryland