

HB 513_Infant-Child Mental Health Consulatation Pr

Uploaded by: Allison Taylor

Position: FAV



Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc
2101 East Jefferson Street
Rockville, Maryland 20852

February 17, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Committee on Ways and Means
House Office Building Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 514 – Support

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

Kaiser Permanente is pleased to support HB 513, establishing the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program.

Kaiser Permanente is the largest private integrated health care delivery system in the United States, delivering health care to over 12 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia.¹ Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, which operates in Maryland, provides and coordinates complete health care services for approximately 800,000 members. In Maryland, we deliver care to over 460,000 members.

Kaiser Permanente is strongly supportive of initiatives – like this one – that provide education and training on mental health and wellbeing interventions in the school setting. Supporting the mental health and resilience of students, teachers and staff is critical for creating a positive school climate. Schools and districts that support the mental health of their employees are likely to have a workforce with lower levels of stress, improved school employee attendance, lower levels of employee turnover, and an increased ability to model positive emotions for students.

Through Kaiser Permanente’s [Thriving Schools](#) program and, we are finding that children and youth are experiencing unprecedented mental health challenges as a result of COVID. However, caregivers – both in and out of the classroom – have limited knowledge to identify signs of mental health issues in young children and pursue appropriate intervention and support strategies. As a result, young children with undiagnosed and/or treated mental health issues will enter schools without the necessary clinical supports and/or social and emotional skills needed to thrive in an academic environment. Kaiser Permanente strongly supports this bill as a first step in helping to address this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me at Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org or (202) 924-7496 with questions.

¹ Kaiser Permanente comprises Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plan, and its health plan subsidiaries outside California and Hawaii; the not-for-profit Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, which operates 39 hospitals and over 650 other clinical facilities; and the Permanente Medical Groups, self-governed physician group practices that exclusively contract with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and its health plan subsidiaries to meet the health needs of Kaiser Permanente’s members.

Kaiser Permanente
Comments on HB 513
February 17, 2022

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Taylor".

Allison Taylor
Director of Government Relations
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Mid-Atlantic States, Inc.

HB 513_FAV_Nelson.pdf

Uploaded by: Allyson Nelson

Position: FAV

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

MCF_Fave_HB 513.pdf

Uploaded by: Ann Geddes

Position: FAV



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.

Contact: Ann Geddes
Director of Public Policy
The Maryland Coalition of Families
10632 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 234
Columbia, Maryland 21044
Phone: 443-926-3396
ageddes@mdcoalition.org

HB 513_MFN_FAV_Macsherry.pdf

Uploaded by: Clinton Macsherry

Position: FAV



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

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) strongly supports HB 513, which would formally establish and increase funding for the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project (IECMHCP). IECMHCP provides critical and highly effective mental health and social-emotional support services for young children, their child care programs, and their families.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

IECMHCP is a prevention-based service. It pairs a mental health consultant and/or a behavioral specialist with early education professionals who work with infants and young children (and their families) in the places where they learn and grow, such as child care programs. IECMHCP demonstrably improves classroom climate, improves teacher confidence, and decreases challenging behavior in children. It has documented outstanding success in preventing suspensions and expulsions from preschool settings.

Last year, this Committee passed HB 776, which required a thorough evaluation of IECMHCP. The resulting report confirms the strengths of IECMHCP, but also highlights “a stark need for increased access to the project’s services.” Research indicates that of the 430,000 Maryland children from birth to age 5, between 8,700 and 30,000 need the services IECMHCP provides. Given current resources, only a tiny fraction—6% of the low-end population estimate—can be served. Even that figure likely understates the degree of unmet need amid the pandemic.

HB 513 would triple the State’s modest investment in IECMHCP, from just under \$2 million to \$6 million, and help address the glaring need for more mental health consultation services for young children, their child care programs, and their families. MFN respectfully urges the Committee’s favorable consideration of HB 513.

MFN joins the Developmental Disabilities Council in support the following wording alteration: On page 2, lines 27-29, and on page 3, lines 22-24, remove “suffer from” and replace with “have”.



NASW HB 513 House Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Gail Martin

Position: FAV

Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee
House Bill 513: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established

****SUPPORT****
February 17, 2022

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Social Work in Schools Committee, we would like to express our support for House Bill 513: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established.

NASW is the largest national organization of social workers, representing 120,000 social workers and almost 16,000 of those are employed in Maryland. Over 500 school social workers are currently working in Maryland public schools.

In education, school social workers help to remove barriers to learning so that children can achieve to their highest level and are the first line of intervention for students with mental health and behavioral challenges. While many of our youngest learners have had prior school experience in daycare centers or daycare homes, some have not met with success and present for their first public school experience less prepared to learn than their age-level peers. These students not only often fail to optimally benefit from developing critical early skills and fall behind, but they also can disrupt the learning of their classmates.

A study in the *Journal of Family Studies* (June 2020) looked at emotional regulation skills in 3-year-olds, a critical time when cognitive and socioemotional abilities are intertwined. The authors concluded that early intervention, “to bolster the early foundations of emotion regulation could enhance school readiness and prevent developmental cascades of peer difficulties, emerging psychopathology, and academic difficulties in preschool and the early elementary school years.”

Day care centers and day care homes usually know who these children are but don’t always know how to help them and their families. The establishment of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within MSDE would provide a critical link between providers, families, and children so that vital intervention could begin as soon as possible.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the benefits that this program can provide for Maryland’s children and families and ask for a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW-C
Executive Director, NASW-MD

MD Catholic Conference_FAV_HB 513.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 17, 2022

HB 513

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 513. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 513 would establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The program would enroll children and families in need of intensive mental or behavioral health services in appropriate clinics or programs, seeking to promote their behavioral and mental health wellness. The program would also provide behavioral and mental health wellness training, coaching and mentoring to teachers and other caregivers in addressing behavioral challenges. Lastly the program would promote community-resource partnerships and ensure access to stable high quality child care.

Children are the core of the family unit and any legislation that seeks to stabilize their child care environment should be considered a priority. Stable child care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families. Moreover, enabling working parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services. The State should thus do all it can to support access to child care services for working parents.

Additionally, this is a very challenging time for the mental health of so many in our state and society. To the extent that this legislation seeks to connect those who need it with mental health services, the Conference lends its support. It is for these reasons the we request a favorable report on House Bill 513.

PGCRC testimony ECMH 2.15.22.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Iverson

Position: FAV

February 15, 2022

**Testimony Concerning HB 513: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
Consultation Program - Established**

Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means

**Jennifer Iverson, Executive Director
Prince George's Child Resource Center, Inc.
9475 Lottsford Road, Suite 202, Largo, MD 20774
(301) 772-8420
jiverson@pgcrc.org**

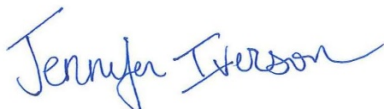
Prince George's Child Resource Center (PGCRC) envisions vibrant, healthy communities where individuals and families care, support and advocate for each other and invest in creating opportunities for children to develop strong, successful life paths. The Resource Center has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they seek child care where their children can thrive.

We urge the Committee to support HB 513 and establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development.

This is undoubtedly the best time to make this investment to promote positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children. We must make sure referrals are possible, and we must make sure services are available for those who seek them. 72% of Prince George's County child care providers are seeking training to provide children with social emotional supports.

Project WIN, PGCRC's early childhood mental health program, helps child care providers and families identify and treat mental health issues and social-emotional challenges for young children ages two- to five-years old. We primarily work with programs that serve children with disabilities, children from low-income households, and English Language Learners. The need for special-needs child care and intervention is substantial, with children who have emotional and social disorders comprising a large segment of the population in need of our services. Currently, 79% of the children referred to Project WIN are male and 69% are African American.

We receive many more requests than we are able to serve. Currently, we have two full time staff serving Prince George's County, but that is not nearly enough to cover 800 programs, many of whom are reporting that the Pandemic has impacted young children's mental health. The stress of the past two years is not lost on these young, receptive brains; they perceive what is happening in their families, and it sometimes results in behavior that can be addressed with enough resources. Minimizing negative impact today has a positive, long-term impact on the future.



BaltimoreCounty_FAV_HB0513.pdf

Uploaded by: Joel Beller

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JOEL N. BELLER
Acting Director of Government Affairs

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG
Associate Director of Government Affairs

MIA R. GOGEL
Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **House Bill 513**

TITLE: **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
Program – Established**

SPONSOR: Delegate Ebersole

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 17, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established. This legislation would establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program to promote positive mental and behavioral health practices for children.

Stay at home orders and social isolation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the social and mental health of Maryland’s children. In 2021, Baltimore County saw increased rates of depression among youth and many students struggling with virtual education. Protecting the health of children is a top priority of County Executive John Olszewski. For children with developmental and behavioral struggles, early intervention is key to ensuring a bright future. This can be accomplished by providing equitable access to vital mental and behavioral health services for all children in Maryland.

House Bill 513 ensures the protection of young cognitive health by establishing a state funded program for the promotion of positive mental and behavioral health practices. This legislation would identify children who may suffer from developmental, emotional, social or behavioral issues in grades kindergarten through second for enrollment. Children and their families would be given referrals for more specific treatment, training to address behavioral issues, and partnerships with community resources. It is critical that children and their families have access to the help they need to promote their well-being.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 513. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.

HB513

Uploaded by: Keontae Kells

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of House Bill 513

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established

To: Chair Vanessa Atterbeary and Members of the Ways & Means Committee

From: Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore

Date: February 17, 2022

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports House Bill 513 as it 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. This program would establish a new normal for young children and families that need consistent support from mental health professionals.

These last two years being in a pandemic has exacerbated the need for mental health care for infants and children under 6 more than ever. The isolation that children and families have faced has caused daily interactions and transitions to be more difficult than usual. Also, families have had to face a new normal that have caused them to face battles that have not usually been an issue. In Baltimore City, specifically lower-income communities, the access to mental health professionals has proven to be extremely difficult. Over the past year the Early Childhood Advisory Council has held focus groups and one of the issues that was discussed was the need for mental health support for young children and families. The wait time for a referral can take up to 3 months, which is 3 months that additional guidance is not received. This bill would help ease the burden for families and allow centers with eligible children enrolled to provide referrals to gain access to appropriate clinics or programs for assistance with children dealing with developmental, social, emotional, or behavioral health issues.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League works collaboratively to support data-informed, community-driven solutions to align resources to dismantle systemic barriers that limit the possibilities for children, families, and communities. Our policy focus is also guided by and in support of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention Youth and Victim Services' Results for Child Well-Being. Through our strategic planning process, we have prioritized three of these results areas, focusing on the success of Baltimore's children in school; the economic stability of families; and the safety of communities for children, youth, and families. We support HB513 in particular because of its alignment with the result areas that work to ensure "Children Are Successful in School."

For more information contact Keontae Kells, Executive Administrator kkells@familyleague.org

HB 513 FAV IECMHC Directors Joint Message.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Latta

Position: FAV

Testimony Concerning HB 513: "Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established"
Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee, February 17, 2022
by the directors of the MSDE Funded Consultation Programs

Position: Favorable

We are writing to express our appreciation to the subcommittee for today's hearing on HB 513: "Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established," and for their attention to this important program, which works to support the mental health needs of our youngest students in their earliest educational settings throughout the state. **As the Directors of the 12 programs that make up the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Childhood's funded project, we are writing jointly to express our favorable support of the bill as proposed.**

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) is a prevention-based service that pairs a mental health consultant with families and adults who work with infants and young children in the different settings where they learn and grow, such as child care, preschool, and their home. The aim is to build adults' capacity to strengthen and support the healthy social and emotional development of children — early and before intervention is needed. At its core, IECMHC is intended to create fundamental shifts in early childhood professionals' beliefs, attitudes, and practices to support more effective caregiving for all children, regardless of race, gender, class, or a myriad of other factors.

As you know, Maryland was a leader in adaption of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, with the initial pilot program in 2002, and has remained committed to utilizing our effective programs as a key strategy to promote positive social emotional development and address behavioral concerns in young children. Child care providers and parents across the state can access IECMHC services free of charge throughout the state of Maryland. Services include:

- Observation and assessment of children and the child care environment using research-based tools
- Partnering with child care providers to deliver training, mentoring, and coaching to help create environments that better support the social and emotional needs of young children
- Increasing childcare staff skills in addressing the social and emotional needs of children to improve readiness for school
- Supporting child care providers to help retain and serve children with behavioral and mental health needs
- Supporting positive relationships with providers and families

Over the past two years work and lives have been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 global pandemic that sent children and child care providers behind masks and closed many classrooms. We have seen increased attention to the potential impact and reach of consultation to support the child care workforce. IECMHC is in many ways at ground zero for this pandemic, navigating issues of classroom hygiene and safety, economic impact of the pandemic and extended stress of delivery of services in a limited nature. All of this has both impacted and highlighted the importance of early childhood and family-focused work and settings, as we all worked to engage and support families through zoom calls and computer screens.

We are appreciative of the bill's effort to include funding for the program, as each of our programs deal with issues of wait lists and underserved children, families and child care providers based on flat funding and increased population demands.

Again, thank you for your commitment to our state's youngest students, their families, and the early childhood educators that so dedicatedly serve them.

Sincerely,

*Denise Taylor-Turner, Director
Project Right Steps, Serving: Kent, Queen
Anne's, Caroline, Talbot, and Dorchester
Counties*

*Heather Glass, Director
APPLES (Early Childhood Destination:
Inclusion), Serving: Garrett, Allegany, and
Washington Counties*

*Kelly Hutter, Director
Project First Choice, Serving: Calvert,
Charles, and St. Mary's Counties*

*Morgan Horvath, Director
Project ACT Early Childhood Consultation
Services, Serving: Baltimore County, Cecil,
and Harford Counties*

*Nancy Pelton, Director
Early Intervention Project, Serving:
Baltimore City*

*Patty Morison, Director
Partnership for Emotionally Resilient Kids,
Serving: Carroll and Frederick Counties*

*Sheila Maness, Director
Project WIN, Serving: Prince Georges
County
CHAMPS, Serving: Anne Arundel County*

*Janelle Parker, Director
Lower Shore Early Intervention Program,
Serving: Wicomico, Worcester, and
Somerset Counties*

HB513_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 513
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program –
Established**

**Ways and Means
Thursday, 2/17/2022
3:00 p.m.**

**Lauren Lamb
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 513, which would implement and fund the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development with the goal of promoting positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children by providing certain referrals and services for children, families, teachers, and caregivers.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project, first piloted by the State Department of Education in 2002, has a strong track record of providing preventative mental health support for children and caregivers. The benefits of early child mental health consultation are numerous, including improved social-emotional competence for children, reduced rates of suspension and expulsion, and reduced teacher turnover.¹ As mental health concerns increase in the wake of the Covid-19 global pandemic, providing families, educators, and children with preventative social-emotional development tools is an important step toward

¹ The Georgetown Manual For School-Based Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services, https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/FCC_Manual_2020_Proof2.pdf, p. 9 (Accessed February 15, 2022)



improving school climates and strengthening relationships.² This legislation would implement a proven-effective program and ensure its funding going forward.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 513.

² Maryland's Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Fiscal Year 2020 Brief, https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/19/legislative_brief_fy2020_3.pdf, p. 1 (Accessed February 15, 2022)

Candelaria HB 0513 Testimony 2.17.22.pdf

Uploaded by: Margo Candelaria

Position: FAV

February 16, 2022

Dear Delegate Atterbeary and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Margo Candelaria, Ph.D., Research Assistant Professor and the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMB SSW), Institute for Innovation and Implementation (The Institute) urges the House Ways and Means Committee to issue **a favorable report on HB0513 - Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established**, sponsored by Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I am writing to share my favorable support for HB0513 which will establish the Maryland's Infant and Early Childhood Consultation Program (Consultation). Consultation is an evidence-informed intervention designed to build the capacity of early childhood professionals' ability to nurture social and emotional development in infants and young children, by working with their adult caregivers to best support social emotional development and address social emotional concerns. **Consultation has been shown to successfully: Support children's social and emotional development¹; address challenging behaviors in early learning and home environments¹; improve classroom climate and child behaviors²; and reduce preschool suspensions and expulsions.²**

History of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Maryland

I currently serve as the lead evaluator for Maryland's Consultation program under a contract between MSDE and the Institute at UMB SSW. The Institute has been working with MSDE since the inception of the Consultation program beginning in 2002. At that time, UMB partnered with Georgetown Center for Child and Human Development, MSDE and BHA on a pilot study of two programs in Baltimore City and Eastern Shore. Positive outcomes from that study led to securing statewide funding beginning in 2006 for an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program operated through MSDE that included 12 programs covering all 24 jurisdictions. We at the Institute at UMB SSW have maintained active and ongoing collaboration with MSDE since then, increasing the evaluation capacity over the years to include quarterly reports, an annual legislative brief, and other deliverables. The Institute also offers ongoing implementation support including workforce development training and coaching in various domains. As can be seen in the most recent legislative brief³, in Maryland there are significantly improved positive classroom and child outcomes with teacher reported behaviors and classroom observations demonstrating statistically significant improved scores after receiving Consultation. **However, currently the system is only able to serve less than 600 children annually per year which does not fully reflect the full number of children who would benefit from services.**

Current Capacity in Maryland

¹Cohen. E. & Kaufmann, R.K. (200, Rev. Ed). Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. DHHS Pub. Rockville MD: Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA

² Perry, D. F. Allen. M. O., Brennan. E., M. & Bradley. J. R (2010) The Evidence Mental Health Consultation in Early Childhood Settings: Addressing Children's Behavioral Outcomes. Early Education & Development 21(6), 79:5-824 doi:10.1060/1040928090347:5444

³Latta, L., Afkinich, J., Kane, A., Wasserman, K., & Candelaria, M. (2021). Maryland IECMHC Legislative Brief for FY2020.

Consultation have been level funded for over a decade. Although there currently is statewide coverage, it is insufficient and clearly does not reach the need of all children and early childhood program providers. As an example, there are only two consultants funded to cover all of Baltimore City. However, there are approximately 41,600 children ages 0 to 4 living in Baltimore⁴, and 19,927 child care slots in Baltimore city including home, center, and head start sites⁵. Clearly, two consultants is not nearly sufficient coverage to work with children and providers in Baltimore City. This discrepancy is similar across the state.

It is clear there are gaps in coverage. As the most recent report reflects⁶ The current program is effective but in need of expansion and improvement. With more resources, the Maryland Consultation program would have greater capacity to intervene earlier, helping providers create more supportive environments, prevent more intense behavioral concerns, and more successfully keep children in schools. At current levels, programs often are not available for more promotion and prevention activities at the program and classroom level, and thus are typically called in when a specific child is in crisis. Although the data for the last three years in Maryland indicate only 3-5% of children who engage in Consultation are suspended or expelled from child care¹⁷⁸, this does not capture the children who are suspended or expelled before accessing Consultation services. In fact, anecdotal evidence from IECMHC providers indicates that children are often removed from or have left their child care setting while awaiting Consultation services. Currently, we do not know rates of suspension and expulsion among providers who do not have access to or engage in IECMHC.

Current Maryland Practice Standards

Despite level funding, Maryland has worked hard to offer high quality services. From 2018-2020 The Institute partnered with MSDE Division of Early Childhood and Division of Early Intervention and Special Intervention in a collaboration with the National Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Center of Excellence to update the state Consultation standards, supporting the integration of updated national standards for the for Maryland's Consultation Program. **The Maryland Practice Standards and Recommendations were published in the Spring of 2020 and are in the process of being implemented by programs⁹. A primary goal of the standards was to more specifically delineate workforce requirements and competencies.** Although national standards recommend Consultation providers be licensed clinicians^{10,11}, Maryland's IECMHC workforce are primarily not licensed providers, with some

⁴ Baltimore City Early Childhood Care & Education Landscape Analysis. April 2020

⁵ Maryland Family Network, LOCATE: Child Care, November 2019 and Baltimore City Public Schools, Pre-K Classrooms, 2019-2020.

⁶ Tirrell-Corbin, C., Jones Harden, B., Jimenez Parra, L., Martoccio, T. & Denis, K. (2021). Evaluation of Maryland's Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project. College Park, MD: University of Maryland, Center for Early Childhood Education, and Intervention.

⁷ Wasserman, K. & Candelaria, M. (2019). FY19 Maryland IECMHC Legislative Brief. [MD IECMHC Leg Brief 2019](#)

⁸ Andujar, P., Fry, J., Wasserman, K. & Candelaria, M. (2018). FY18 Maryland IECMHC Legislative brief. . <https://create.piktochart.com/output/35764480-md-iecmmc-project-1-25-2019>

⁹ Sweeney Wasserman, K., Candelaria, M., Hanna, T., & Guerra, J. (2020). Maryland Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services: Practice Standards and Recommendations. [MSDE IECMHSSP 2020 Standards](#)

¹⁰ Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (2017). Competencies. Retrieved from: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/IECMHC/infant-early-child-mental-health-consult-competencies.pdf.

¹¹ Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (2020). Consultation Competencies. Retrieved from: <http://www.iecmhc.org/documents/IECMHC-competencies.pdf>.

programs engaging licensed providers. It should be noted that two programs that routinely engage licensed providers have done so through use of non-MSDE funding including local early childhood funding in Montgomery County and the use of a SAMHSA System of Care grant in Southern Maryland (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties). **At the current funding level it is not possible to hire highly qualified staff. A past survey of program directors indicated it can be difficult to find qualified providers, with employment vacancies lasting 3-12 months¹² and this was also demonstrated in the recent statewide report⁶.** A recent analysis by our team at the Institute found that Consultation can be effective for children and classrooms regardless of licensure status, but there is a significantly greater positive impact when the provider is licensed¹³. Based on these data, the standards including a tiered system that requires programs have at least one licensed provider on staff to work with non-licensed providers and to see more complicated cases as needed. In addition, the new Maryland Consultation standards require additional competencies such as engaging in routine reflective supervision – a key pillar for the practice – , use of the state's established National Pyramid Model training and coaching practices, having deep knowledge and understanding of equity, and creating pathways to create a qualified workforce through collaboration with clinical mental health graduate programs. The Institute at UMB SSW is working with MSDE to engage in these workforce development efforts. However, limited funds prevent full implementation of these efforts.

Overall, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is an important beneficial program with demonstrated outcomes in Maryland to retain children within early education settings and reduce suspension and expulsion, which we know has significantly detrimental outcomes for not only that child, but the family at large. However, at current funding levels the program is insufficiently serving young children in the state and has limited capacity to secure a highly qualified workforce. For these reasons, The University of Maryland School of Social Work, Institute for Innovation and Implementation **urges a favorable committee report on HB0513, and expresses appreciation for your attention to this matter.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Margo Candelaria, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor
Co-Director, Parent, Infant, Early Childhood (PIEC) Program
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12 Fry, J., Fehringer, A., Wasserman, K., & Candelaria, M. (2019). Maryland IECMHC Quarterly Report 2019-2020 Q1. [Maryland IECMHC Quarterly Report July to September 2020](#)

13 Candelaria, M., Afkinich, J., Sweeney Wasserman, K., Endy, K., & Hanna, T. (2021). Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Outcomes by Consultants' Licensure Status
Manuscript draft January 2021. [MSDE IECMHC Licensure Outcomes draft Jan 2021](#)

HB0513 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Co

Uploaded by: Margo Quinlan

Position: FAV

House Bill 513 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established

House Way and Means Committee

February 17, 2022

Position: Support

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. MHAMD and our Children's Behavioral Health Coalition appreciate this opportunity to support House Bill 513 for its positive impacts on infant and early childhood mental wellbeing.

HB 513 would establish an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development, responsible for referring children and families in need of intensive mental or behavioral health services to appropriate clinics or programs; training, coaching, and mentoring teachers and caregivers to address challenging behaviors; building partnerships with community resources; and working to ensure children have stable, quality child care programs. HB 513 also includes an annual appropriation for the fund.

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultation Program is a crucial program for early identification of behavioral and emotional problems in children aged 0-5. Mental Health consultants currently provide consultation at no charge for childcare or educational setting personnel who have a child of concern in their setting. The consultants may make recommendations for interventions in the center or may refer a child or family out for further assessment or treatment.

This program is currently administered on a county or regional basis and has struggled to remain steadily funded. These ECMH consultation programs have been an important referral source to the preschool teams at many area hospitals and play a critical role in identifying children very early, which saves money down the road. Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project services include:¹

- Observation and assessment of children and the childcare environment using research-based tools;
- Partnering with childcare providers to deliver training, mentoring, and coaching to help create environments that better support the social and emotional needs of young children;

¹ MSDE, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation Project.
<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/infant-and-early-childhood-mental-health-iecmh-consultation-project>

For more information contact:

Margo Quinlan, Director of Youth & Older Adult Policy: 410-236-5488 / mquinlan@mhamd.org

- Increasing childcare staff skills in addressing the social and emotional needs of children to improve readiness for school;
- Working with childcare providers to help retain and serve children with behavioral and mental health needs; and
- Forging positive relationships with providers and families.

Investment in infant and early childhood brain development has impacts on preventing the achievement gap, improving health outcomes, and boosting lifetime earnings. There is an overall return on investment through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity and reduced crime.²

Expansion of the ECMH Program would tie directly to Maryland's increased awareness of and response to Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs. About 50% of children are exposed to a traumatic event, and as many as 67% of trauma survivors experience lasting psychosocial impairment. Trauma can affect a child's brain and delay certain development which can make it harder for the child to concentrate and study. These ACEs have been found to have a direct impact on the normative development and lifelong health of individuals. ACE's include extreme poverty, family problems, experiencing or witnessing violence, abuse and discrimination. All of these can be extremely traumatic for children. ACEs are a significant risk factor for mental health and substance use disorders and can impact prevention efforts.

The most profound impact we can make on substance use disorders (SUD) is prevention - supporting parents of young children, as a community, can help to alleviate stressors that ultimately contribute to infants and toddlers not receiving the consistent nurturance they need to develop coping skills and neuropathways for soothing. The development of the dopaminergic pathways in the first two years has the most profound impact on whether or not an individual can learn to self soothe (through a consistent, attuned, attentive adult presence) or if they begin to habitually seek external resources to soothe their stress – a precursor for SUD. This might include prenatal support groups, SUD treatment for pregnant parents, parenting groups, subsidized daycare or other daycare support, case management for young families, support navigators for young families, and support for parents in the hospital after delivery.

This investment infant and childhood mental health would support Maryland's youngest during a time of critical need for their development and can help further build the resiliency of our communities as a whole. For these reasons, Mental Health Association of Maryland, and our Children's Behavioral Health Coalition, request a favorable report on HB513.

² Heckman, J. (2017). "4 Big Benefits of Investing in Early Childhood Development." <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/4-big-benefits-of-investing-in-early-childhood-development/>

Abilities Network Project ACT HB513 testimony 2022

Uploaded by: Morgan Horvath

Position: FAV



SEEING ABILITIES NOT DISABILITIES.

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

Abilities Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that assists individuals with disabilities in Maryland to achieve their personal goals and reach their maximum potential. Project ACT has been a leading support in the Maryland early learning community for 24 years. We support HB 513.

The Child Resource Center of Baltimore/Harford/Cecil Counties at Abilities Network/Project All Children Together (ACT) provides Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) services to Baltimore, Harford and Cecil Counties.

Of the children whose caregivers receive IECMH services from Project ACT, **approximately 92% are retained in care**. This service provides invaluable support that prevents suspension and expulsion, keeping parents working and their children learning. *“[The consultant] has been hugely helpful to our family. She has supported our child - acted as an advocate for our family and gone above and beyond,”* according to one Baltimore County Parent.

A multi-disciplinary model is key to our success. Project ACT utilizes a multi-disciplinary team that includes social workers, special educators, behavior specialists, and early childhood educators. Referrals are often made for children who are reacting to developmentally inappropriate practices, who have unidentified development delays, or who have experienced trauma. Approximately 20% of children who receive IECMHC services have an IFSP or IEP upon referral, but receive no special education support services in the child care setting. With a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, we are able to leverage our expertise to support this wide variety of needs. The 2020 Maryland IECMHC Project Standards from MSDE have been revised to align with national standards, increasing the required staff qualifications to include a licensed clinician, and adding additional requirements for ongoing staff support. This is a valuable addition to the service model. However, a sufficient increase in funding to achieve these goals did not accompany the FY22 grants.

Current funding serves only .2% of the childcare population in our jurisdictions, when data shows that 1-5% of the population may be in need of support. The National Pyramid Model estimates that between 1-5% of children in care will require intensive individual support through services such as IECMHC. Project ACT is funded to provide this service to approximately .2% of the children who could be enrolled in childcare across Baltimore, Harford and Cecil Counties.

www.abilitiesnetwork.org

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SEEING ABILITIES NOT DISABILITIES.

Project ACT is only able to accept an average of 62% of referrals, and funds are typically exhausted by the third quarter. Over the past five years, Project ACT has been able to serve only 62% of the children who were referred for IECMHC services on average and demand continues to rise. From FY17-FY19, referrals increased by 23%. Most years, Project ACT is unable to accept new referrals by the end of the third quarter of the grant term. Regrettably, many children placed on a waiting list for this service are expelled from their childcare programs.

Wait time for service can be as long as 8 weeks. Wait time for a consultant to become available can reach from 4-8 weeks during heavy referral periods. During this time, children may be suspended or expelled from their programs, and teachers reach burn out points from lack of support. *“At the start of the school year I had a class that had a huge variety of difficulties. I lost control of my classroom. However with step by step help from [the IECMHC consultant] I was able to gain control again. [The consultant] not only helped with [the identified child] but also helped with all other children,”* said one Harford County Early Childhood Provider.

This bill offers an opportunity for the State to expand IECMHC services and provide these vital services to more young children. We respectfully urge the Committee’s favorable consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Morgan Durand Horvath".

Morgan Durand Horvath, M.Ed.
Director, Project ACT
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MPA Testimony 2022 - Support - House Bill 513 – In

Uploaded by: Pat Savage

Position: FAV



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February 17, 2022

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Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT** for **House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program** – which would establish a program within the State Department of Education’s Division of Early Childhood Development to support positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children and their families, teachers, and caregivers.

Access to high quality preschool and childcare settings provide a foundation for children to build social, emotional, and academic skills that promote success during early elementary school and beyond. Unfortunately, many children who experience developmental, emotional, or behavioral struggles during early childhood have more limited access to these types of settings, and children who can enroll in programs are at elevated risk for dismissal or expulsion due to behaviors related to their developmental, social, or emotional needs. In addition to missing out on the benefits of quality early childhood socialization and instruction, these children often are not accurately identified or connected with available early intervention resources until much later than ideal, often after they have entered early elementary school. Given the robust research base that speaks to the significant and lifelong benefits of appropriate and early intervention for both individuals and communities, MPA supports HB 513’s efforts to accurately identify children in need, provide training and support for their teachers and caregivers, and ensure that children in need of intensive services are supported in accessing those programs.

For these reasons, MPA urges the committee to **favorably report on HB 513**, to support Maryland’s children and families. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., J.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

2022 LCPCM HB 513 House Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Scott Tiffin

Position: FAV



Committee: Ways and Means Committee

Bill: House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established

Hearing Date: February 17, 2022

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established*.

LCPCM supports the creation of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program because it will help identify children in need of behavioral health services. Many childhood behavioral needs are not identified until a child enrolls in school. By identifying children in need of services before they reach school age, this program will connect children and families to support as soon as possible, improving outcomes. Additionally, we appreciate that this bill includes supports for parents of children with behavioral health needs. Raising a child with behavioral health needs can often be challenging, and it is important that parents have support.

We have several suggested amendments that will support the Commission’s work in examining behavioral health shortages. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or (443) 350-1325.

2022 MASBHC HB 513 House Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Scott Tiffin

Position: FAV



PO Box 716
Baltimore, MD 21233
202.669.0031 phone

Support

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

Ways and Means Committee

February 17, 2022

The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) supports House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established. This bill creates a referral program for young children in need of behavioral health services.

Currently, many children with behavioral health needs are not identified until they reach school age. This means that children and their families may spend years trying to cope without and support. The program created by this bill will help connect children with behavioral health needs to services much earlier, which can improve outcomes and help ensure children are best prepared to enter school.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or (443) 350-1325.

HB 513 Early Childhood MH Consultation Program_BHS

Uploaded by: Stacey Jefferson

Position: FAV



February 17, 2022

**House Ways and Means Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

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

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 77,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 513- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program-Established. This bill establishes an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMH) Program within the State Department of Education’s Division of Early Childhood Development, that is responsible for referring children and families in need of intensive mental or behavioral health services to appropriate clinics or programs; training, coaching, and mentoring teachers and caregivers to address challenging behaviors; building partnerships with community resources; and working to ensure children have stable, quality child care programs. It also includes an annual appropriation for the fund.

BHSB supports HB 513 because ECMH Consultation Programs provide families and adults who work with infants and young children the capacity to strengthen and support the health social and emotional development of children. This program is currently administered in Baltimore City and on a county or regional basis across the state and has struggled to remain steadily funded.

Investments in programs, like the ECMH Consultation Program, support infant and early childhood brain development. They have impacts on preventing the achievement gap, improving health outcomes, and boosting lifetime earnings. These programs also provide an overall return on investment through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity, and reduced crime.¹

In addition, expansion of the ECMH Consultation Program is a critical step in Maryland’s response to mitigating the negative impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, are a category of early life traumas which negatively impact long-term health, prosperity, and social mobility outcomes. Recent data collected in Maryland found that more than 40 percent of Maryland children have at least one ACE-15.4 percent have two or more.² While ACEs and trauma can have a profound impact on a child’s health and well-being lasting into adulthood it is not a life sentence. Preventative programs like in HB 513 are key to stemming the tide. As such, **BHSB urges the House Ways and Means Committee to support HB 513.**

¹ Heckman, J. (2017). “4 Big Benefits of Investing in Early Childhood Development.”

<https://heckmanequation.org/resource/4-big-benefits-of-investing-in-early-childhood-development/>

² Baltimore Sun. More than 40 percent of Maryland children experience traumatic events. October 19, 2017.

HB513_MARFY_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



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:

Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 | therese@ashlargr.com

HB 513 - SWA - Infant and Early Childhood Mental H

Uploaded by: Ary Amerikaner

Position: FWA

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

House Ways and Means Committee

February 17, 2022

The Department requests one technical amendment that removes the direct reference that the Division of Early Childhood within MSDE be identified as the sole division charged with administering the program and instead use all-encompassing language that refers only to a representative from MSDE as a whole.

MSDE respectfully requests that you consider this information as you deliberate **HB 513**. Please contact Ary Amerikaner, at 410-767-0090, or ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov, for any additional information.

HB 513 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Co

Uploaded by: Barbara Wilkins

Position: INFO



Maryland

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AND MANAGEMENT

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HOUSE BILL 513 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established (Ebersole)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: February 17, 2022

COMMITTEE: House Ways & Means

SUMMARY OF BILL: HB 513 mandates an annual appropriation in the amount of \$6 million to fund the creation of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development. The purpose of the Program is to identify and refer children for behavioral health services as well as to train teachers and caregivers to address behavioral challenges in young children.

EXPLANATION: The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy proposal being advanced by the legislation, but rather on the \$6 million mandated appropriation provision that impacts the FY 2024 and subsequent budgets.

DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

**For additional information, contact Barbara Wilkins at (410) 260-6371
or barbara.wilkins1@maryland.gov**

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