

HB0322

Public Health — Home and Community-Based Services for Children and Youth
House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 17, 2023

Support

We strongly support HB0322. For the past two years we have been fighting to keep our daughter, D, alive. We can describe our life by the numbers: 15 trips to ER for suicide attempts or suicidal ideation, 11 inpatient stays in acute care psychiatric hospital, 5 stays in out-of-state residential treatment centers, 8 partial hospitalization programs, 1 protracted legal struggle with school system for appropriate placement where D's emotional needs can be met in order for her to be able to get an education, tens of thousands of dollars out of our pocket to get her the basic treatment she needs just to keep her from completing a suicide, untold hours of our time blindly seeking the correct path forward.

We are writing in support of HB0322 so that other families can avoid the struggles and heartache we have been through.

During the time we spent attempting to get placement for D we tried to obtain home- and community-based services in order to keep her stable and out of crisis. The level of case management and wraparound services was not enough to keep her from falling into crisis over and over again. The level of care she received was on a level of babysitting which, although appreciated, was grossly inadequate for her needs. She has stolen, manipulated, jumped off a roof, attempted to break her own leg with a sledgehammer, slashed her body, taken pills by the fistful, run away, and threatened her sisters, parents, and pets. She has tried suicide by cop and stepping into traffic. We lived in dread twenty-four hours a day.

My husband and I are educated, we own a house, we have white skin, and I have been able to take the time to research and advocate for D. We have private pay insurance which prevented us from receiving the level of services D needed. We as a family needed direction, guidance, and referrals. D needed to be surrounded by a therapeutic environment in order to even begin to function, let alone be educated or participate in community life. We didn't know where to turn.

We joined an advocacy group for D's Reactive Attachment Disorder for a monthly fee, we paid a therapeutic educational consultant to advise us, and we hired a lawyer to represent us. The fees for these services were also in the tens of thousands, like our private insurance out of pocket expenses. If D had a physical

disorder instead of a mental health disorder our journey to wellness would have been completely different and there would be supports in place.

We were fortunate enough to be able to find funds to pay for these costs. Many working families in Maryland are not as fortunate and don't have the financial resources for case management. Their children may end up in the justice system, costing taxpayers more, and this bill will address that matter.

As of two weeks ago we finally have placement in a therapeutic boarding school that addresses adoption, attachment and identity issues, where D can be in a 24-hour therapeutic environment with enough supports that she can be educated, make healthy friendships, and we as a family can begin to heal.

This bill needs to be funded and passed so other families can receive services their children desperately need. We hope that our story will help those families. Please contact us if you would like a deeper dive into our experience. Thank you for considering this bill.

Angela Nichols and Trey Warman
1511 Grooms Lane
Woodstock, Maryland 21163
443-960-5306
warnic6@gmail.com