



*"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"*

**Testimony submitted to Senate Finance Committee  
Support**

**March 13, 2024**

**Senate Bill 876 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program –  
Limited Behavioral Health Services**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, supports **Senate Bill 876 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Limited Behavioral Health Services**. Youth Service Bureaus provide prevention, intervention and treatment services and understand the importance of increasing accessibility and removing barriers for children and adolescents to access mental health care.

As providers who work with families seeking treatment for their children, we understand the importance of addressing issues as early as possible. We work with young people who are experiencing anxiety, depression, behavioral symptoms, school problems, etc. This bill will allow them to receive the help they need even if they do not meet full criteria for a diagnosis. Children and adolescents should not have to suffer until they meet criteria before they can obtain needed mental health treatment.

Data collected by the Annie E Casey Foundation, Department of Health and Human Services, and Center for Disease Control tells us:

- 13% of children and adolescents have anxiety or depression
- 32% of Maryland Adolescents reported they felt sad or hopeless in 12 months before survey

Getting help early not only improves outcomes, but it can also keep a child or adolescent from experiencing worsening symptoms. Mental health disorders, substance use, and behavioral problems can disrupt school performance, harm relationships, and lead to suicide. Effective treatment for these problems, especially if they begin soon after symptoms appear, can help reduce its impact.

*(over)*

Currently, a diagnosis is required to bill for most mental health supports. It is important to note that this legislation does not change who is eligible for Medicaid or current benefits. Instead, it merely reduces a barrier to accessing care.

We urge the passage of this bill to ensure that children and adolescent can receive mental health treatment as soon as symptoms appear.

Respectfully Submitted:

Liz Park, PhD  
MAYSB Chair  
[lpark@greenbeltmd.gov](mailto:lpark@greenbeltmd.gov)