



March 11, 2024

## Testimony Concerning Senate Bill 876 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Limited Behavioral Health Services

The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](#) is a newly locally legislated Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity that brings community together to create a more equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

We urge you to support Senate Bill 876 favorably.

The Children's Opportunity Alliance believes that young children and their families need seamless access to a network of high-quality early childhood services that provide holistic support, mitigate disparities, and lead to lifelong benefits. The ability to access mental and behavioral health services with less barriers and stigma helps to build a more beneficial early childhood system for us all.

This bill acknowledges the complexity of diagnosing mental health issues in young children, noting that it often takes more than three visits to assess accurately. By allowing clinicians more time for evaluation, SB 876 aims to prevent future mental health issues and improve academic performance. Intervening early with young children can prevent much more serious behavioral health issues when these children are older and can also ensure that they are better equipped to perform well in school.

Submitted on behalf of the Children's Opportunity Alliance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

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