

inseparable

409 7th St Northwest, Suite 305
Washington, D.C. 20004
March 12, 2024

Senate Finance Committee
Maryland General Assembly
East Miller Senate Building, Room 3
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT FOR SB0876—Maryland Medicaid Assistance Program—Limited Behavioral Health Services

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Inseparable, a national nonprofit focused on closing the treatment gap for people with mental health conditions, improving crisis response, and supporting youth mental health, I am writing to urge your strong support of SB0876. We are grateful to Senator Washington for introducing this legislation, which will allow children covered by Medicaid to receive certain mental health services regardless of whether they have a formal mental health diagnosis. SB0876 takes a commonsense, yet transformative, step to reduce stigma and improve access to care for children.

Youth mental health concerns—from difficulties adjusting to a new sibling, experiencing anxiety, or coping with a death or a trauma—are common. A child can struggle and experience poor mental health without meeting the criteria for a formal mental health disorder. Requiring a diagnosis to bill for mental health services creates barriers to children getting the very help that could prevent a diagnosable condition or the need for more intensive services. Recognizing this conundrum, California and Colorado have extended eligibility for limited Medicaid mental health services to children and youth without a diagnosis. Maryland should do the same. Doing so will not change who is eligible for Medicaid or expand benefits; instead, it simply eases access to early intervention.

SB0876, the “no diagnosis” bill, is a smart approach that breaks down the barriers that both clinicians and families face when a formal diagnosis is required in order to provide needed help for children. Simply put, it promotes prevention and improved outcomes, reduced crises, and minimized costs. We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0876 and continue Maryland’s national leadership in supporting youth mental health.

Respectfully,



Angela Kimball
Chief Advocacy Officer