

**House Bill 709 Human Services – Youth Services Bureaus – Funding**  
Appropriations Committee  
February 18, 2020  
**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. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 709.

HB 709 appropriates \$1.8 million annually for Youth Services Bureaus (YSB) – entities that are critical in Maryland’s efforts to prevent youth suicides and substance use disorders.

According to the 2018 State Plan of the Maryland Governor’s Commission on Suicide Prevention, the leading cause of death in 2016 for Marylanders aged 10-14 was suicide<sup>1</sup>. Groups with an increased risk for suicide include LGBTQ individuals, youth with behavioral health conditions, individuals in the justice and child welfare systems, etc.<sup>2</sup> Youth Service Bureaus are tasked with providing prevention services to children with a behavioral health concern to prevent youth suicides and substance use disorders, and with a growing body of evidence indicating that early identification is our best hope of engaging these youth in treatment and lessening the severity of their illnesses, we must ensure YSBs have the funding they need to effectively reach Maryland children in need.

HB 709 ensures that YSBs receive stable funding to connect children and youth with behavioral health concerns to effective preventative services. They provide services for disconnected youth, work to address youth and family violence, provide youth mental health and addiction treatment services, and they serve as an intermediary to redirect youth offenders away from the juvenile system. Yet despite demonstrating positive outcomes, there have been several recent closures of YSBs, which reduces the services available to youth with behavioral health needs.

For these reasons, MHAMMD supports HB 709 and urges a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup><https://health.maryland.gov/suicideprevention/Documents/2018%20State%20Plan%20on%20Suicide%20Prevention.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*