



HB 709 – Human Services – Youth Services Bureaus - Funding

Committee: Appropriations

Date: February 18, 2020

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for someone with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to parents and caregivers of young people with mental health issues and to any loved one who cares for someone with a substance use or gambling issue.

MCF strongly supports HB 709.

Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) provide critical mental health and substance use services in their communities. They support youth struggling with mental health issues, offer family counseling, and provide substance use assessment, referral and treatment services. In addition, they consistently produce good outcomes – the Department of Juvenile Services evaluates the YSBs, and in the most recent analysis found that 99% of youth were not re-adjudicated within two years after ending treatment in a YSB.

Designating funding for YSBs within the Children’s Interagency Fund will guarantee that families can count on these programs. The four priority areas outlined by the Governor’s Office for Children (GOC) do not match the population that YSBs are mandated in COMAR to serve. YSBs by statute are to provide individual, group and family counseling, information and referral services, crisis intervention including suicide assessments, and substance use assessments and referrals. These critical mental health and substance use services are not among the four current priority areas of the Governor’s Office for Children, which provides direction to the Local Management Boards.

By guaranteeing funding, and allowing dollars from the Children’s Interagency Fund to bypass the Local Management Boards, HB 709 will go a long way to ensuring that critical services remain available to youth with mental health and substance use challenges and their families.

We urge a favorable report on HB 709.

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