

**House Bill 1382 Children in Out-of-Home Placement –
Placement in Medical Facilities**

House Appropriations

February 27, 2020

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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 with amendments of House Bill 1382.

HB 1382 establishes a timeline for out-of-home placements after a child is treated in a psychiatric facility.

In Maryland, community behavioral health services are often inaccessible to families and their children living with a mental illness. Recent closures of several residential treatment centers (RTCs) have only exacerbated this lack of access. More restrictive emergency departments are increasingly being utilized for behavioral health care due to the limited options in community behavioral health program for children. The Maryland Hospital Association released data demonstrating that some children have been hospitalized “more than 100 days past medically necessary while they waited for a transfer.”¹ This is alarming and demonstrative of a system that is woefully under-resourced to discharge minor patients from a hospital to a community program.

Children and youth with behavioral health needs are often faced with fewer treatment options than adults. Mental Health Association of Maryland has seen an uptick of helps calls from families seeking services for a child with a behavioral health concern that is stuck in the emergency department. These children are having hospital overstays in a setting that could worsen their condition and further delay their recovery. HB 1382 is a good start at responding to the issue but additional measures should be taken to improve the children’s system of care.

MHAMD supports amendments being offered that will coordinate efforts across various departments, local jurisdictions, and expand resources in the community to meet the critical needs of children and youth visiting emergency departments.

For this reason, **MHAMD supports this bill with amendments and urges a favorable report.**

¹ The Washington Post. “MD youths needing psychiatric care find long waits, drives.” December 11, 2019. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-youths-needing-psychiatric-care-find-long-waits-drives/2019/12/11/516058a2-1c6e-11ea-977a-15a6710ed6da_story.html)

For more information, please contact Irnande Altema at (410) 967-3164