



Maryland Association of
Resources for Families & Youth

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Joanne C. Benson

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
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DATE: February 18, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 624 – *Health – Mobile Response and Stabilization System for Children and Families in Maryland – Study*

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is a statewide network of private agencies serving at-risk children and youth and advocates for a system of care in Maryland that meets the needs of children and families. MARFY is a program of Maryland Nonprofits and **supports** the passage of Senate Bill 624.

Senate Bill 624 requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Governor's Commission to Study Mental and Behavioral Health in Maryland to study and make recommendations on the development and implementation of a comprehensive mobile response and stabilization system (MRSS) for children and families. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), MRSS is designed to intercede in urgent behavioral situations, before such situations become unmanageable emergencies. SAMHSA identifies MRSS as a viable alternative to acute care and residential treatment because MRSS programs demonstrate cost-savings while improving outcomes. Similarly, the 2019 report of the Governor's Commission found that crisis services are an integral part of the health care system and critical to patients and families in need.

All youth in Maryland should have access to appropriate services, regardless of their level of need. The system of care is designed to have a graduated level of care, depending on the needs of the child, starting with community-based prevention services. Providers know that if there is access to clinically appropriate services on the front end for youth in care then we can significantly reduce the number of youth requiring hospitalization and stop using hospitals as placement, which now occurs as a result of the current lack of resources. Maryland needs substantial resource development (i.e. creation of new programs) and funding to match the growing needs of the youth in child welfare. One part of the system that is present in other states and is woefully lacking in Maryland is the availability of 24/7 mobile crisis services that result in reducing the need for higher levels of services. Passage of Senate 624 will provide a framework for the development of a critical component of an effective and comprehensive system of care for Maryland's children and families. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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