



TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair  
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Michele Guyton

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 26, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 847 – *State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs*

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For more than 60 years, Linwood Center has been providing life-changing programs and services for children and adults living with autism and related developmental disabilities. Linwood currently supports child and adults on the autism spectrum from jurisdictions throughout the State of Maryland. Linwood is one of a handful of programs in the United States and one of only three in the state of Maryland that provides comprehensive education and residential programs throughout the lifespan under one service umbrella. Linwood offers program continuity from childhood into adulthood, developing lifelong relationships with individuals living with autism from elementary school through retirement and old age. Linwood's accredited nonpublic special education program and licensed residential programs provide intensive positive behavioral supports and long-term educational and vocational services to Maryland's autism community. Linwood respectfully offers its **support with amendment** for House Bill 847.

House Bill 847 establishes a State Coordinator for Autism Strategy in the Department of Disabilities as well as an Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs. The State Coordinator in consultation with the stakeholder group is to identify and evaluate existing public, private, and nonprofit services for individuals with autism and their families. In accordance with the findings of that review, by July 1, 2021 the strategic plan is to be developed for addressing autism-related needs in the State, including needs in the areas of employment, housing, health care, training for first responders, and criminal justice professionals as well as identification and intervention. The plan is to identify national benchmarks and performance measures to use in evaluating the success of addressing autism-related needs.

Given Linwood's extensive history and universally recognized expertise in providing comprehensive education and residential programs for individuals on the autism spectrum throughout their lifespan, Linwood is uniquely positioned to provide invaluable input to the work of the Advisory Stakeholder Group proposed in House Bill 847. To that end, Linwood would recommend an amendment to the legislation that adds a representative of Linwood to the membership of the Workgroup. With its amendment noted, Linwood urges a favorable report.

**For more information call:**  
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