



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

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
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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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The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **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 the in addressing autism-related needs.

MDAAP strongly supports the specific focus on autism-related needs that this bill provides as they often differ from the needs of other disabled populations. MDAAP would request that the bill be amended to also include a requirement that the strategic plan address the early identification of children at risk for being on the spectrum, as well as the early diagnosis and enrollment in early intervention. Early identification and intervention is a critical component to effectively addressing the needs of individuals with autism. With its amendment noted, MDAAP requests a favorable report.

**For more information call:**

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