



TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Members, Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Michele Guyton

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: March 23, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 718 – *State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs – Mandated Appropriation*

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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** for House Bill 718.

Legislation passed in 2020 established a State Coordinator for Autism Strategy in the Department of Disabilities as well as an Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs. However, despite the passage of the legislation, funding has not been provided for the State Coordinator position and therefore the work reflected in the 2020 legislation has not moved forward. House Bill 718 ensures funding for the position of State Coordinator. Passage of House Bill 718 will enable a State Coordinator to be hired and will advance the work outlined in last year's legislation, which requires the State Coordinator, in consultation with the stakeholder group, 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, a strategic plan is to be developed for addressing autism-related needs in the State. The plan is also to identify national benchmarks and performance measures to use in evaluating the success in addressing autism-related needs. As amended, the bill also moves the position to the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, which MDAAP also supports.

MDAAP strongly supports the specific focus on autism-related needs that was reflected in the 2020 legislation. Passage of House Bill 718, as passed by the House, will enable that work to move forward. A favorable report is requested.

**For more information call:**

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