

February 5, 2021

Maryland Senate
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of SB 286 / HB 108: Behavior Health Response Services – Modifications

Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee.

As a parent and advocate for persons with disabilities, I can't help but support a bill like this one as well as HB 442 / SB 557 (The Suicide Treatment Act). The creation of a Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant is an idea whose time has come.

My son has over the years in public school become so anxious and frustrated by his learning environment that he has tried to hurt himself on several occasions. I try to imagine a situation where the school personnel would not just lock him in an office to "calm down". But rather have staff, on the premises, that could help. More funding for programs and training in mental health services and crisis management intervention services would be simply amazing.

The scenario I described above plays out every day in schools, out in other public and within many homes across the state. Individuals with mental challenges or disabilities become so frantic that they make bad decisions, resulting in physical, further mental harm and hand cuffs/arrests.

Recent case of Bay Bridge Jumpers. In troubling times like these, wouldn't it be nice to have programs and personnel that are geared toward not only treating folks in a hospital, but being able to respond to a crisis call and de-escalate a situation, allowing the person to be taken in for treatment, or to simply move on with their day peacefully. Too many times I have been on the phone with a family who simply can't find a treatment center to service their loved one, while they are in crisis. Calling the police to help can sometimes have dire and deadly consequences. Perhaps one day soon, a phone call can open up a menu of services and options for families and individuals that need them desperately.

Please let's do our best to help fund programs of this nature, that will help to address and counsel mental health issues in a less violent and humane ways. By creating a system of supports which kick in with a phone call and helps create a greater positive impact on so many lives. Thus, helping to guarantee brighter outcomes for many, while protecting the futures of individuals and families impacted by mental health challenges. Please help by supporting programs like this that put the skills in the hands of people that can help and have a positive impact within our communities statewide.

Please support SB 286 /HB 108 and please return a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo

Parent and advocate for persons living with disabilities.

Parent Advocacy Consortium