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Health and Government
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**TESTIMONY FOR HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

CHAIR SHANE PENDERGRASS
VICE CHAIR JOSELINE PENA-MELNYK

**HOUSE BILL 1243: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES AND VOLUNTRAY
PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS – CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS – REPORT
MODIFICATIONS**

SUPPORT

March 2, 2021

Good Afternoon Chairman Pendergrass and Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk. I am here today to ask for your support for HB 1243 – Behavioral Health Services and Voluntary Placement Agreements – Children and Young Adults – Report Modifications. This bill adds on to a bill I passed 3 years ago, the purpose of which was to better understand the quality of mental health care young people were receiving in the State and identify gaps that need filling.

As many of you know, children and youth often have far fewer treatment options than adults when it comes to behavioral health care. Closures of residential treatment centers, such as Adventist Behavioral Health in my District, and more recently the Jefferson School in Fredrick County, has exacerbated this issue. Additionally, a decrease in the number of approved voluntary placement agreements has continued to make life difficult for families of children who need assistance.

Before my bill from 2018, data that could help identify those gaps was difficult to attain or just completely unavailable. I am proud to say today that the first report produced as a result of my bill, which was released this year, was a success and has proven very useful. Armed with this information, advocates have been targeting resources to underserved areas and developing related policy recommendations.

However, the report has also shown that there are still gaps in the data that need to be filled. Specifically, the study does not include information on the availability of telehealth services, certain substance use disorder services, and does not provide a demographic breakdown to allow for analysis of racial and ethnic disparities. This bill provides all this information, so that the next report we receive will contain all the information we need to improve the lives of Maryland's children.

For this reason I am asking for a favorable report on HB 1243. Thank you for your time.