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Finance Committee

Joint Committees

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight

Management of Public Funds

Protocol



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson

SB 659: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Psychiatric Inpatient Care - Admissions Restrictions
(Psychiatric Hospital Admissions Equity Act)

Good Afternoon Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee. I present SB0659 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Psychiatric Inpatient Care – Admissions Restrictions.

This legislation is pivotal in protecting some of the most vulnerable in our society from the cost associated with mental health care. As we all know, mental health has been at the forefront of many topics lately, mainly for good reasons. It is no longer taboo and should be treated with the same care and sincerity as any other bodily function we visit the hospital for. Mental health affects how we think, feel and act as we cope with life. At times these things may not be in unison, thus affecting how we function in the world and therefore becoming an unhealthy bodily function that needs special medical treatment. Just as any other injury or health issue you may visit the doctor for and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program helps cover, Maryland Medical Assistance Program should treat psychiatric inpatient care no different.

The purpose of this bill is to prohibit the Maryland Department of Health from limiting or restricting admission of a Maryland Medical Assistance Program recipient for inpatient care at a particular psychiatric hospital or an acute general care hospital with separately identified inpatient psychiatric service except under certain circumstances, and generally relating to restrictions on admissions for psychiatric inpatient care and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program. To improve behavioral health in our society, we must start by allowing access to coverage by those affected. This bill will help patients who require mental health assistance do so and not be bogged down by hospital fees and have coverage.

Thus, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB0659.