



## **HB 971 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Substance Abuse Treatment – Network Adequacy**

**Committee: Senate Finance Committee**

**Date: March 30, 2022**

**POSITION: Support with Amendments**

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for a loved one with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a child, youth or adult with a mental health, substance use or gambling issue.

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MCF strongly supports HB 971 with amendments to make it an emergency bill, and to immediately begin to direct the \$500,000 appropriated for the bill in the Governor's Supplemental Budget to treatment services for adolescents.

The last six years has seen the closure of all four of Maryland's residential substance use treatment programs for adolescents that accepted Maryland Medicaid. Therefore for the last six years, youth with Medicaid who require residential substance use treatment (who have been assessed to need ASAM 3.5 or 3.7 level of care) have been out of luck. They might bounce in and out of Intensive Outpatient Programs, receive inappropriate treatment in mental health programs, become involved with the Department of Juvenile Services, or die. Families are desperate for their child to get the help they need.

The Maryland Department of Health has not fixed this problem.

HB 971 as written simply states that the Department of Health and the Behavioral Health Administration will have an adequate network of substance use treatment providers for adolescents. The Fiscal Note, however, states that BHA reported that they will need \$500,000 to hire a consultant to do a needs assessment. **What a waste of money that would be.** We know the need – at this moment I am aware of three youth on Maryland Medicaid who have been assessed (multiple times) as needing residential treatment for their substance use disorder, who are getting nothing.

One 17 year old girl, who overdosed twice since December and had to be administered Narcan, is now sitting in Sheppard Pratt. The treatment team there tried to get her a scholarship to go to the only residential substance use treatment program for adolescents in Maryland, but they were unsuccessful. Sheppard Pratt has determined that she is ready for discharge from the

hospital, but the mother is refusing to take her home, fearing for her daughter's safety - yet another instance of a hospital overstay. The mother has been told that Child Protective Services will be brought in and she will be charged with child abandonment.

That \$500,000 in the Governor's Supplemental Budget must be immediately directed to provide the treatment that youth are being assessed as needing. MDH must provide Medicaid-eligible children with the appropriate substance use treatment. **Therefore we urge a favorable report on HB 971 with amendments.**

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