



**February 22, 2022**

**Senate Bill 656  
Children – Residential Treatment Centers – Education Funding  
Finance Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as the juvenile services population.

The success of Maryland's future begins with investing in our youngest residents and we must ensure that these residents and their families have the resources they need to become thriving members which contribute to our communities and our economy. Senate Bill 656 would remove a barrier to access for a child in need of behavioral therapeutic services imperative ensuring they can grow into healthy adults.

If passed, this legislation would authorize a core service agency, local addictions authority, or local behavioral health authority, subject to the availability of funding in the State budget, to approve funding for a youth's educational costs during a residential treatment center (RTC) admission for medical or psychiatric purposes. A residential treatment program is a 24 hour-a-day, year-round program that provides intensive help for children or youth with serious emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs.

The current antiquated funding streams require some families to surrender physical custody of their children to the Department of Human Services in order for the youth to access treatment in a RTC. Whether or not a child must use the child welfare system depends on whether the child has a non-public educational placement in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

SB 656 seeks to fix this inequity. Maryland's youth and their families should be able to access the behavioral health treatment they need when they need it. Their educational services should not dictate the path they have to take.

It is for these aforementioned reasons, that we politely ask for a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 656. Thank you.

**For more information call or email:**

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