



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

Committee: House Health and Government Operations

Date: February 24, 2022

POSITION: Support

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.

MCF strongly supports HB 971.

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. The reasons for this were many: low rates that hadn't been raised in a decade; an ASO that would only approve stays of a few weeks at best; more children with complex needs that required one-on-one support; and the decision by the Department of Juvenile Services to no longer send children with DJJ-involvement to those programs. All these things made the financial viability of the programs unfeasible, so they shut down.

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, or become involved with the Department of Juvenile Services, which, as was said, stopped sending youth to substance use residential treatment facilities. Families are desperate for their child to get the help they need.

The Maryland Department of Health has not fixed this problem. Unless they approve out-of-state placements, MDH is in danger of violating the EPSDT benefit: "all children under the age of 21 enrolled in Medicaid are entitled to the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, which requires states to provide access to any Medicaid-coverable service in any amount that is medically necessary, regardless of whether or not the service is covered in the state plan."

MDH must provide Medicaid-eligible children with the treatment they need. We urge a favorable report on HB 971.

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