

House Bill 971 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Substance Abuse Treatment - Network Adequacy

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 24, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. MHAMD appreciates this opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 971.

HB 971 would require the Maryland Department of Health to have an adequate network of substance use disorder providers for children under 18 years old. Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration reports that two in five, or 42.3% of Maryland children are eligible for public behavioral health services (PBHS) statewide, which represents a 4.2% increase over the previous year. In FY19, 13.8% of the eligible population received one or more behavioral health services within the PBHS statewide.¹

The public health and safety threat from drug- and alcohol-related intoxication continues to grow. Americans are now more likely to die from opioid overdoses than car crashes, and alcohol use among youth is more widespread than use of tobacco or illicit drugs.² According to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), about 10.4 million youth ages 12 to 20 (27.2 percent) reported drinking alcohol in the past month. Additionally, youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 25 were more likely to be current illicit drug users than adults 26 and older.³

The last few years has seen the closure of all four of Maryland's residential substance use treatment programs for adolescents that accepted Maryland Medicaid. Youth who require residential substance use treatment currently are left with few options, may become involved with Department of Juvenile Services, and face increasingly high morbidity or mortality rates as a result of this fractured and inadequate system.

HB 971 would require MDH provide these vulnerable children with the care, treatment options, and recovery pathways they need. For these reasons, **MHAMD urges a favorable report on HB 971.**

¹ Maryland Department of Health. (July 30, 2021) *Health-General Article, § 7.5–209, Annotated Code of Maryland - Report on Behavioral Health Services for Children and Young Adults (MSAR # 11535)*

² Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2012

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010

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