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February 22, 2022

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: HB971 Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, urges the Committee to provide a **favorable report on HB 971**.

Maryland's citizens who receive health care through Maryland Medical Assistance have long suffered with limited access and sometimes no access to needed substance use providers across the entire delivery system, including outpatient services, intensive outpatient services, day treatment, residential treatment, and hospital-based treatment. As a result, many individuals with substance abuse issues, especially if they are under 18 years old, are not able to access needed treatment for their substance use problem.

HB 971 addresses the problem by requiring that the Health Department and the Behavioral Health Administration be required to ensure that the delivery system has an adequate network of substance use practitioners for children under the age of 18 years old. We know, of course, that problems simply do not go away because they are untreated or because we look to another system, like the legal system, to address the problem. This does not work.

HB 971 addresses an access to treatment issue. HB 971 is straight-forward in its approach by requiring that the Maryland Medical Assistance Program have an adequate number of substance use treatment practitioners for children under 18 years old.

For these and other reasons, the MPA urges you to **SUPPORT HB 971**.

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at exec@marylandpsychology.org if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., JD
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs