



DATE: March 7, 2023 **COMMITTEE:** Senate Budget and Taxation
BILL NO: Senate Bill 622
BILL TITLE: Medicaid Waiver Programs - Waitlist and Registry Reduction (End the Wait Act)
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 622 - Medicaid Waiver Programs - Waitlist and Registry Reduction (End the Wait Act).

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 622 authorizes Medicaid funding to be used for hiring and retaining providers for the Community Pathways Waiver, Family Supports Waiver, The Brain Injury Waiver, the Home and Community Based Options Waiver, the Medical Day Care Services Waiver, the Model Waiver for Medically Fragile Children, and the Autism Waiver.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive, and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs. Over 27,000 individuals receive services annually at Kennedy Krieger.

Rationale:

During the 2022 legislative session, legislators passed an important bill requiring the Maryland Department of Health to develop plans to reduce the registries and waiting lists by 50% in fiscal year 2024. This legislation is a tremendous step forward in ensuring individuals with disabilities and their families are able to access important programs and services. Additionally, the fiscal year 2024 proposed budget has provider increases and other investments that will assist in this process.

However, by clarifying that \$10 million must be used to expand the Autism Waiver by 1350 slots, this bill takes those appropriations one step further. The additional \$20 million in this fund will be used to provide community services to individuals on the other waiting lists, grow provider capacity, increase rates and address other issues related to capacity.

Currently, close to 4,000 individuals with disabilities are on the waiting list for services through the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). This number does not include individuals on the DDA "future request" list, a registry for those who have been found eligible for developmental disability services but are more than 3 years away from entering adult services. In addition, over 6,000 school-age children are on the autism registry waiting to go through the eligibility determination process. These children, who need services immediately, must wait years to have even the possibility of receiving services. Clearly, far too many Marylanders with disabilities and their families are waiting for the critical services and supports they need to live, work, and thrive in their communities.

Kennedy Krieger recognizes that dedicated financial resources are needed to: support onboarding and training of new provider agencies, address the staff recruitment and retention crisis of the direct support professionals' workforce, and increase the capacity of current provider agencies by offering critical funds to expand service offerings and operational infrastructure.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 622.

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