



SB 387 – Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times

Committee: Senate Finance

Date: February 23, 2023

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 challenge.

MCF strongly supports SB 387.

It's been said hundreds of times: **Maryland has the longest emergency room wait times in the entire nation.**

A Task Force is urgently needed to examine the issues that we're encountering in Maryland, look at what other comparable states have done to reduce emergency department wait times, and make recommendations for improving the state of affairs in Maryland.

The consequences of these long wait times are tremendous. The problem takes its toll on patients and ER staff alike.

The issue of long ER wait times is intricately entwined with the issue of youth in mental health crisis being stuck in emergency department beds. We've heard and seen in the press stories of children and youth stuck for days, weeks, and even months in emergency departments, waiting for an inpatient psychiatric bed. Addressing this problem would go some way to reducing emergency department wait times.

There are other pieces of legislation before you that would begin to address the issue of kids stuck in emergency departments:

- SB 255 – Home and Community-Based Services for Youth, would bring intensive, high-fidelity Wraparound services back to Maryland to keep youth out of the emergency

department in the first place. Other states that have high-fidelity Wraparound services have seen a decrease in emergency department utilization by as much as 32%.

- SB 362, establishing Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), would provide 24/7 crisis services for youth, also keeping kids out of emergency departments.

We already have two solutions at hand to begin to address the emergency room wait time crisis. We urge you to pass these measures in addition to SB 387.

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