



**Senate Bill 255**

Public Health- Home and Community-Based Services for Children & Youth

Senate Finance Committee

February 14, 2023

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

My name is Karen Carloni and I am the Executive Director of Southern Maryland Community Network, Inc. We provide adult and youth services in Calvert, Charles and Saint Mary's Counties. We serve about 700 individuals in the public behavioral health system per year and employ 70 staff. SMCN has operated an intensive in-home service program, reimbursed under the 1915i waiver, for approximately 8 years.

Intensive in-home services under the 1915i have been plagued by both eligibility and program viability barriers for years. Medicaid rates do not cover the cost of services and catastrophically low utilization makes it impossible for providers to scale up their business models. In order to keep the program open and deliver the intensity of service required, SMCN must weave together grant funding and Medicaid reimbursement.

We served 5 children under the 1915i last year, most of whom didn't get referred to us until they were already on a waitlist for an RTC placement because their families no longer felt they could keep them at home. The problem is bigger than just the known and unresolved challenges with the 1915i, of which there are many including both medical necessity and financial eligibility requirements. There has been a decades-long underinvestment in community services, especially those serving children with the highest need. We have received a small grant to supplement services to this population—children involved with multiple systems including juvenile services and at risk of RTC placement—for 17 years. This grant has not been increased once during that time. We operate on razor-thin financial margins as the costs of delivering services continues to rise with inflation and salary requirements, but rates and supplemental funding do not keep pace.

SB255 takes critical steps toward aligning reimbursement rates with the cost of delivering intensive in-home and care coordination services. The demand for behavioral health care is at an all-time high. When children and families are not able to access intensive community services they end up using emergency rooms and inpatient services at high cost to the state and traumatic cost to those families. The enhancements in this bill are needed now more than ever. **Southern Maryland Community Network urges this committee to pass HB255.**

