



TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Lorig Charkoudian

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone
410-244-7000

DATE: February 14, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 82 – *Maryland Medical Assistance and Children’s Health Insurance Programs – School-Based Behavioral Health Services – Reimbursement*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support with amendment** for House Bill 82.

MDAAP recognizes the pressing need to enhance access to behavioral health services for Maryland’s children. While House Bill 82 proposes to expand access to these services within the school setting, the State will be required to apply to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to receive a State Plan Amendment, which if approved, would enable the State to provide reimbursement for medically necessary behavioral health services provided in a school setting to all individuals enrolled in Medicaid or the Maryland Children’s Health Program, regardless of whether the services were under an IEP or individualized family service plan.

MDAAP believes the expanded access to services in the school setting provides an opportunity to better identify and address children’s behavioral health needs. However, access to the initial care in the schools does not address the existing challenges of access to community-based behavioral services that the school providers would want to refer their students to for further care. MDAAP would request that the bill be amended to also charge the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland State Department of Education to work with the local school agencies to create a framework for school health professionals to have a process for referral to community-based behavioral health professionals for further care. Passage of House Bill 82 can be an effective enhancement of access to behavioral health services for many of Maryland’s youth. With its amendment noted, a favorable report is requested.