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March 10, 2023

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair

Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair

Health and Government Operations Committee

House Office Building, Room 131

Annapolis, MD 21401

### **RE: House Bill 1155 – Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model**

#### **Position: Support with Amendment**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT (with an amendment)** for **House Bill 1155 - Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model**, which establishes a workgroup designed to substantially improve the effectiveness of Maryland's behavioral health services for our youth.

The bill recognizes that young people should be actively engaged in the development of the systems of care designed to support them. Youth are directly involved in and impacted by community issues that predict health and well-being, including school bullying, violence, alcohol and drug use, sex trafficking, mental health problems like anxiety, depression and suicide, and climate change. Youth are actively involved in community projects and leadership. To make youth-led projects truly effective we can promote youth voices and more prominently recognize their work in the community.

Youth are actively engaged in finding meaning, making and exploring connections, while they individuate from parents. It is important that adults make space for youth to make positive connections with each other. This is more likely to happen when we facilitate youth leaders who can identify youth priorities and bring marginalized youth voices forward.

MPA respectfully requests the addition of a psychologist to the Workgroup. A psychologist can share lessons learned; for example, when designing the model program and its evaluation, organizers must take responsibility for engaging youth effectively. Some past codesigned projects have been vulnerable to marginalizing the youth voice. Adolescent/adult communication can be challenging; a psychologist would bring knowledge resources that would benefit the Workgroup as the model is designed.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB1155. If we can be of any further assistance as the Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at [mpalegislativecommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mpalegislativecommittee@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,

*Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.*

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R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

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