
MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 1155

Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model

March 14, 2023

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (“CRSD”) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland’s public-school systems. We are committed to making discipline responsive to students’ behavioral needs, fair, appropriate to the infraction, and designed to keep youth on track to graduate. **CRSD recognizes the importance of collaborating with youth and the local community to provide effective and holistic behavioral health services and supports House Bill 1155.**

Community-based services provide a holistic approach to mental health treatment, social support, and allow youth to remain in the community and in school while receiving the treatment that they need. Furthermore, a youth-led or youth co-designed behavioral health model allows youth to use their own lived experiences to help create a program that will directly benefit them. It gives youth the decision-making power to determine what services they will receive, and what will be most helpful to their population. The value of youth’s lived experiences cannot be understated. As members of the population to be served, they are able to provide invaluable insight into the perspectives of participants, potential barriers to the model’s success, and possible outcomes. The participation of youth on every level of the model also helps to combat the stigma associated with seeking mental health services. In a youth co-designed model, youth can access peer support and build relationships that may make treatment more effective.

CRSD strongly believes that providing youth with mental health services in the community and alongside their peers will not only increase the effectiveness of these services, but will also be able to address behavioral health concerns on a preventative basis. CRSD members regularly hear from family members of youth with mental health disabilities that have failed to locate proper outpatient or community-based mental health services. As a result, the treatment of these mental health disorders is often delayed, symptoms may worsen, and families are forced to seek emergency mental health services. While these emergency services can provide support in times of crisis, they are not created to support youth in their daily lives. Furthermore, emergency mental health services do not provide the same level of peer support that a community-based model is able to provide.

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In order to have a behavioral health model that adequately addresses the needs and perspectives of youth so they can be successful in the community and in school, it is extremely important for youth to be active members that help to design and implement that model.

For the foregoing reasons, CRSD supports HB 1155.

For more information contact:

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CRSD Members

Disability Rights Maryland

UMBC Choice Program

ACLU

Office of the Public Defender

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Project HEAL

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