



HB 1155 – Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Date: March 14, 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 is in strong support of HB1155.

As Maryland’s statewide family organization for families of children with mental health needs (one of many across the country), we hold as a fundamental principle that behavioral health services should be **family-driven and youth-guided**. As a child grows older, this principle begins to flip: services should be **youth-driven and family-guided**. HB1155, by requiring the establishment of a Workgroup that will be tasked with studying youth codesigned behavioral health models and developing a plan to implement a youth codesigned pilot, aligns with our philosophy of **youth and family voice and choice**.

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) has for years emphasized the importance of youth-guided care, which it says “means that youth have the right to be empowered, educated, and given a decision-making role in the care of their own lives as well as the policies and procedures governing the care of all youth in the community, state, and nation.” Youth codesigned behavioral health models take this further – not only should youth be given a decision-making role in policies and procedures that impact the care of all youth, they should be given a role in the development of the service model as well.

So many behavioral health models have failed because they did not tap the expertise of youth when they were designed (think the “Just say no” substance use prevention program). Youth, especially youth from minority communities, know best what models will be appealing, culturally competent, and effective with their peers.

HB1155 only calls for a Workgroup that will further study the issue and look at models that are being implemented across the country (and across the world), and make recommendations. It

is key that this Workgroup will heavily consist of youth themselves. These are the first steps in bringing a youth codesigned pilot to Maryland, as the recent JCR recommends.

Please issue a favorable report on HB1155.

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