

March 8, 2023

Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee,

NAMI Anne Arundel County enthusiastically supports HB1107. This legislation bridges the gap between our youth and the vital resources they need. It establishes a program that will help school aged children in the county by identifying the contributing factors to mental and behavioral health needs of students, the coordination of services and the improved delivery of services, as well as establishes a position to coordinate critical services to be delivered to school aged children that voluntarily call the Anne Arundel County Help Hotline.

We know that undiagnosed, untreated, and inadequately treated mental illnesses significantly interfere with a student's ability to learn, to grow, and to develop. NAMI believes that, at the earliest possible time in their lives, all children and adolescents with mental illnesses deserve to be diagnosed, appropriately treated, and offered the services necessary to achieve and maintain their recovery. NAMI calls for strong interagency collaboration between all child- and family-serving agencies, including state and local mental health systems; public and private schools; child welfare systems; and juvenile justice systems.

A comprehensive array of treatment, services and supports that address prevention, early intervention, recovery, and support should be available to children, adolescents and young adults living with mental illnesses and their families. Services, supports, and appropriate accommodations should always be timely, easily accessible, and provided in the least restrictive environment. Establishing this Pilot Program in Anne Arundel County will create two behavioral health coordinator positions in the county to help facilitate accommodations for our school aged children. We know that early intervention saves lives.

We applaud Delegate Chisholm for encouraging schools to develop appropriate accommodations and supports that appropriately address the needs of students in Anne Arundel County.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report.

Fred Delp
Executive Director
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