



**House Health & Government Operations Committee
March 27, 2024**

**Senate Bill 991 – Behavioral Health - Language Assistance Services
Pilot Program**

Support

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 751 SB 991 would establish the Language Assistance Services Pilot Program in the Behavioral Health Administration to provide grants to three local behavioral health authorities to reimburse behavioral health providers for language assistance services for children and adolescents with limited English proficiency (LEP) receiving care and their parents or legal guardians with LEP who coordinate their care.

As Maryland’s population continues to diversify in every way, including in nationality and language, it is imperative that our public behavioral health system be able to meet the needs of children who need mental health and substance use services. Providers report significant barriers to finding services that can help families where English proficiency is limited. They express concerns about the cost of the existing services, for which they are not reimbursed, as well as the quality of the translation services.

This bill would enable three jurisdictions to provide grants to provide translation and interpretation services as well as collect data on utilization of language assistance services in behavioral health care to help lay the groundwork for regulatory and policy changes that support meaningful access to behavioral health care for individuals with LEP in Maryland. We believe this is a wise investment in a system of care that should be accessible to all.

We urge a favorable report on SB 991.