

March 4, 2025

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

1 in 4 children in the U.S. experience maltreatment. Unfortunately, many abused children experience negative physical, mental, and social outcomes. Research shows that 1 in 6 youth/adolescents will experience a mental health condition in any given time. Additionally, 50% of all lifetime mental health conditions begin before the age of 14 and 75% start before the age of 24. However, identifying warning signs or symptoms and seeking treatment early can make a difference in reducing the impact of a mental health condition.

NAMI MD believes that, at the earliest possible time in their lives, all children and adolescents with serious mental illnesses deserve to be diagnosed, appropriately treated, and offered the services necessary to achieve and maintain their recovery. Children need to be able to talk with supportive adults.

We believe that children and adolescents with mental illness have the right and must be offered the opportunity to thrive in nurturing environments. When a provider that an abused child has come to know and trust leaves, this can cause disruption in the child's treatment. This bill ensures that children are made aware of changes so that they can have closure with the providers they rely on.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.