

Senate Bill 696 – Public Health – Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients

Position: Support

February 18, 2025

Senate Finance Committee

The University of Maryland Medical System supports Senate Bill 696 – Public Health – Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients and requests a favorable report on the bill. Senate Bill 696 (“SB 696”) would establish a coordinator within the Governor’s Office for Children to support the Maryland Department of Human Services and Maryland Department of Health in transferring and treating pediatric overstay patients, as well as enhancing data collection and reporting on pediatric hospital overstay patients.

This bill begins to address the critical issue of pediatric hospital overstay patients, which affects not only the well-being of our youngest and most vulnerable patients, but also the efficiency and effectiveness of our healthcare system.

The University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) provides primary, urgent, emergency and specialty care at 12 hospitals and more than 150 medical facilities across the state. The UMMS network includes academic, community and specialty hospitals that together provide 25% of all hospital-based care in Maryland. Our acute care and specialty hospitals are located in 13 counties and Baltimore City, and serve urban, suburban and rural communities.

In recent years, UMMS member hospitals have seen an increasing number of children and youth who are stuck in emergency departments and inpatient units well beyond a period of medical necessity. Since July, the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore City alone has had at least 20 children remain in the hospital for more than 24 hours after medical clearance. These children and youth, who range in age from 1 month to 19 years old, combined for a total of 446 overstay days in an emergency department or inpatient unit. This is just one example from one hospital in our system, but it highlights the growing scope of the problem.

Being forced to stay in a hospital beyond any medical necessity can be a traumatic experience for children and youth. Hospitals are filled with loud and unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells, and pediatric overstays in a hospital setting are frequently isolated from school, friends, and family, and the comforts of their everyday lives.

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University of Maryland Shore Regional Health – University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Easton -

University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Chestertown - University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Dorchester –

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Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital

The issue of pediatric hospital overstay also has significant adverse impacts on patient throughput and the ability of hospitals to treat sick and injured patients in a timely fashion. Each bed and room occupied by a child or youth who does not have a medical need for it limits the ability of a hospital to treat a patient who is in critical need of care. As many of these pediatric overstay are occupying rooms in emergency departments there is a direct connection between this issue and emergency department wait times.

SB 696 is not a silver bullet and will not solve the complex issue of pediatric hospital overstay alone. However, it will have a significant positive impact on the children and youth who are pediatric overstay patients, as well as the ability of Maryland hospitals to serve these children and youth.

For these reasons, the University of Maryland Medical System strongly supports SB 696 and respectfully requests a *favorable* report on the bill.

For more information, please contact:

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