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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senate Bill 696
Public Health - Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients

Good afternoon, Vice Chair Hayes and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to present Senate Bill 696 - Public Health - Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients. SB 696 addresses an egregious problem impacting children and youth across the State.

Every day here in Maryland there are children and youth stuck in hospital emergency departments and inpatient units. As this committee knows, I have been working hard to address the challenges our emergency departments are facing with long wait times. When youth are stuck in an emergency room and unable to transition to a more appropriate care setting to meet their needs, this negatively impacts the child, the hospital staff, and members of the community who need access to emergency services.

SB 696 will not solve all our problems; however, this legislation takes concrete steps to expand the behavioral health capacity we need in the short-term and bring oversight and accountability for placing these youth in the appropriate setting.

The bill does the following:

- Expands residential treatment capacity by directing MDH to staff the licensed but unstaffed state operated residential treatment beds. There are currently 17 of these beds in the state and expanding capacity, even by this much, will make a difference. MDH can use funds currently designated for the Adolescent Hospital Overstay Program to accomplish this.
- Requires state hospitals to participate in the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry. Right now, there is not a line of sight into how many open state beds we have, like we have on the private hospital side. This level of transparency will help us better understand bed capacity across the state.
- Establishes a Pediatric Hospital Overstay Coordinator within the Governor's Office for Children to advocate on behalf of the children stuck in hospitals and streamline

placement efforts. This single point of contact will coordinate with hospitals and all relevant state agencies in pursuit of the most appropriate placement option. This Coordinator is also required to report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on the status of pediatric overstay patients across the state including recommended policy and procedures.

- Lastly, the bill requires the Department of Health to review the reimbursement rates paid to residential treatment centers and respite care facilities for potential reforms that will incentivize the expansion of RTC and respite care facility capacity in the State.

We did not get into this problem overnight, and we will not get out of it overnight. However, passing this bill will allow us to take immediate action to address the needs of children and youth stuck in hospitals across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this legislation to the Committee. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 696.