



House Health & Government Operations Committee

March 26, 2025

Senate Bill 790 - Behavioral Health Advisory Council and the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access - Plan to Implement Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Requirements

Support

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 790. This bill would require the Behavioral Health Advisory Council and the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access to collaborate with stakeholders to inform implementation of recommendations from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). In September of 2024, CMS published a State Health Official letter on Best Practices for Adhering to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) Requirements.

Among the best practices is not requiring that a child have a specific behavioral health diagnosis for the provision of services. This is especially important, according to CMS, when children under the age of 5 are being served.

Last year we supported legislation that would have allowed children enrolled in Medicaid to access behavioral health services without a diagnosis. As the Maryland Department of Health suggested that policy would lead to significant expenditures, advocates have taken the new State Health Official letter on Best Practices and proposed a workgroup to look at implementation.

Best practices cannot be effectively implemented without being informed by clinicians, parents, and young people who have direct experience in the provision or utilization of the existing behavioral health care system. This bill would ensure that input from those with direct experience with Maryland's system be taken into account by Medicaid as implementation plans are developed.

When very young children are in need of services, it is important that specialists be involved. We support the sponsor's amendment to specify that early childhood mental health specialists be a part of the workgroup.

We ask the committee to give Senate Bill 790 a favorable report.