



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

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
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 790 requires the Behavioral Health Advisory Council and the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access, through its workgroup on youth behavioral health, individuals with developmental disabilities, and individuals with complex behavioral health needs, to provide recommendations to implement Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment requirements; and generally relating to a plan to implement Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment requirements.

This legislation proposes the creation of a workgroup to study and recommend strategies for early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral health conditions in children. Early intervention is crucial in supporting a child's healthy development and laying the foundation for success in adulthood. Many children require additional services to address behavioral or mental health challenges, and timely professional assistance can significantly improve their long-term well-being. Without early detection, behavioral and developmental conditions can escalate, potentially hindering a child's academic progress, social development, and participation in extracurricular activities. Undiagnosed conditions requiring specialized educational approaches or behavioral support can leave children struggling unnecessarily. By identifying gaps in the current healthcare system, this workgroup would help ensure that families have access to the resources they need to support their children.

Ensuring access to early screening affirms the dignity and worth of every child by promoting their well-being and development. No family should have to navigate an inadequate healthcare system when seeking necessary services for their child. Additionally, this legislation upholds parental rights by equipping parents with a clearer understanding of developmental milestones and the resources available for intervention when needed. An epidemiological study found that 13.6% of children aged 4–11 experience a mental health disorder within a 12-month period, with ADHD and anxiety disorders being the most common.¹ This highlights the urgency of proactive screening and intervention to provide children with the support they need to thrive. By prioritizing early detection while maintaining parental involvement, this legislation ensures that families can make informed decisions in the best interest of their children.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 790**.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/su/su7102a1.htm>