



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: March 5, 2025

RE: HB1083 – Maryland Department of Health – Workgroup to Implement Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Requirements

### **The MLLC supports HB1083 – Maryland Department of Health – Workgroup to Implement Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Requirements**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1083.

Youth across the US are facing a mental health crisis, but racial and ethnic minorities and immigrant populations are at a disproportionate risk of experiencing more chronic mental health conditions into adulthood. While they experience lower rates of mental illness during adolescence, chronic stressors throughout their childhood often amount to mental health conditions later in life.<sup>1</sup> Such chronic stressors stem from their identities pertaining to race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and documentation status. Experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, unequal access to services, and laws and policies that limit their civil and human rights often spark behavioral health conditions that take a more chronic course in adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

The following bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to convene a workgroup to implement the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' State Health Official letter #24-005: Best Practices for Adhering to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) Requirements for children. This bill promotes the implementation of important behavioral health interventions to ensure all children are connected to the care, services, and treatment they deserve.

CMS' best practices for EPSDT builds upon HHS' efforts to integrate equitable, evidence-based, culturally appropriate, and person-centered behavioral health interventions.<sup>3</sup> Early and periodic intervention and treatment rooted in equitable and culturally appropriated practices is key to addressing youth's unique experiences with discrimination based on their race and ethnicity and documentation status. This will help prevent behavioral health conditions that often take a more chronic course when left untreated.

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<sup>1</sup> [Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Racial and Ethnic Minority Youth](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> [Biden-Harris Administration Releases Historic Guidance on Health Coverage Requirements for Children and Youth Enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program](#)

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1083.