



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

January 28, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Senate Bill (SB) 78 – Juvenile Child Sex Offenders - Juvenile Sex Offender Registry and Prohibition on In-Person School Attendance – Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this Letter of Opposition on Senate Bill 78 – Juvenile Child Sex Offenders - Juvenile Sex Offender Registry and Prohibition on In-Person School Attendance. SB 78 requires a child adjudicated delinquent to register with the juvenile sex offender registry and supervising authority. Law enforcement and the State's Attorneys must notify schools of certain information when a child is arrested for a specific offense. This legislation will prohibit a child from attending public or non-public schools that receive State funds in person if the child has been convicted.

The MDH Healthcare System operates two Regional Institutes for Children and Adolescents (RICA), the John L. Gildner (JLG) RICA (Rockville) and RICA-Baltimore, which provide residential behavioral services. Multidisciplinary treatment teams provide treatment and educational programs for children adolescents who are experiencing emotional, behavioral, and learning difficulties. Additionally, JLG RICA includes the Facility for Children (FFC) program which provides competency attainment services for adolescents who have been accused of a crime but have been determined to be incompetent to stand trial. Further, MDH has plans to construct a new facility on the grounds of RICA Baltimore to serve this population.

The enactment of this legislation will jeopardize the funding for both facilities for all students who attend school and receive services at the facility. The JLG-RICA facility provides day treatment for 80 elementary to high school-aged children in partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools. The school the students attend is a public school. RICA-Baltimore is a public separate day school where public students are referred. The county of the individual student pays the tuition. This bill could significantly impact the ability of these children to receive critical services including educational services.

Additionally, this bill would negatively impact the adolescents served by removing them from their school setting and placing them in an alternative setting, disrupting their current schooling.

It would remove them from the consistency, routine, and potentially safe space of in-person school attendance and place them in a parallel but new and unfamiliar academic setting.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We respectfully urge you to oppose this legislation and work toward a more balanced and thoughtful approach to addressing the safety needs of adolescents in Maryland's mental health facilities and public schools.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Laura Herrera Scott', written in a cursive style.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary