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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Department of Juvenile Services – Rehabilitation Services – Funding - HB522
Testimony of Maryland State Delegate Deni Taveras

Thank you, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and committee members. I am here to ask for your favorable report on HB522 – Department of Juvenile Services – Rehabilitation Services – Funding. This bill is part of a package of bills to address youth substance use disorder of fentanyl.

HB 522 ensures that youth addicted to fentanyl or xylazine are able to admit themselves into a residential rehabilitation facility for up to a year to get clean and get their life in order. The Department of Juvenile Services has the funding to cover treatment if the youth is under their jurisdiction and the Department of Health also has funding to provide treatment if an addicted youth is a Maryland resident. The purpose of this bill is to provide a continuum of care.

Many of these children are high school dropouts, unhoused, uninsured/underinsured and need detoxification services prior to entering residential substance abuse rehabilitation services. These kids need a place to live to rebuild their lives, their careers-trajectory and restore broken relationships, if possible, away from the streets that drew them to addiction. Substance use recovery is a long-term process to make our return on investment worthwhile.

Substance abuse among youth is not only a personal health crisis but also a significant factor in truancy and delinquency. Statistics show that students struggling with substance use are two to three times more likely to skip school, which often leads to involvement with the juvenile justice system. By providing timely long-term residential rehabilitation services, it gives young people a chance to reclaim their futures and re-engage with their education, giving them a pathway to stability, and eventual healthy self-sufficiency.

HB522 represents a vital step toward protecting at-risk youth and providing them with the tools they need for a better future. Thank you for considering this measure, which prioritizes the well-being and potential of our state's most vulnerable children.

I ask this esteemed committee for your favorable report on HB522.