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Health and Government  
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*Subcommittees*

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Substance Use Disorder – Student Information Policy - HB 543**  
**Testimony of Maryland State Delegate Deni Taveras**

Thank you, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and committee members. I am here to ask for your favorable report on HB543, Substance Use Disorder – Student Information Policy, a legislative initiative aimed at ensuring youth have access to timely intervention to residential detoxification treatment statewide. This bill is part of a package of bills I am putting forward to support youth struggling with substance use disorder (SUD).

HB 543 addresses a critical issue: the growing number of unhoused and displaced youth struggling with substance use disorder (SUD) who face barriers to accessing treatment due to a lack of identification. Many of these students lack parental support, proper identification, and/or financial resources, preventing them from receiving the care they need. This legislation ensures that schools can facilitate access to residential detoxification services by allowing limited information sharing with approved treatment facilities while maintaining privacy protections.

Substance use among students is a major driver of chronic absenteeism and juvenile delinquency. National data shows that 35% of chronically truant students are involved in substance use, making intervention critical. Without timely treatment, these students face academic failure, increased dropout rates, and higher involvement with the juvenile justice system. By informing the intake officer of a residential detoxification facility of the last known school to where a youth was in attendance, this will facilitate access to the facility and put the child on a faster road to recovery. The goal of this bill is to remove barriers to care and create a pathway for at-risk youth to recover.

This bill has been crafted with student privacy in mind. It aligns with FERPA and HIPAA regulations and ensures that only directory information is shared with student consent, while personally identifiable information is only disclosed in emergencies. No Social Security numbers or place of birth are requested, and parents maintain the right to opt out of non-emergency disclosures.

This legislation is about more than just timely intervention—it's about saving lives, preventing long-term harm, and ensuring that our youth receive the support they need to succeed.

I ask this esteemed committee for your favorable report on HB 543.