



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

January 23, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill (HB) 68 – Public Schools - Children Suspected of a Crime of Violence - Prohibition on In-Person Attendance – Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this Letter of Opposition for House Bill 68– Public Schools - Children Suspected of a Crime of Violence- Prohibition on In-Person Attendance. HB 68 will prohibit a child from in-person attendance at a public school if the child has been identified by law enforcement as a suspect in a crime of violence until the investigation is complete and the child is no longer identified as a suspect.

House Bill 68 would impact the students in Montgomery County and the surrounding area who attend or are eligible to attend John L. Gildner RICA. An MDH operated residential mental health treatment facility located in Rockville. Multidisciplinary treatment teams provide treatment and educational programs for adolescents who are experiencing emotional, behavioral, and learning difficulties. Program services include psychiatric evaluation and treatment; 24-hour nursing and residential services; individual, group, and family therapy; crisis intervention; special education; extended year education program; alternative learning center; rehabilitation services; and community integration. The facility provides day treatment for 80 elementary to high school-aged children in partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools who operate the school.

This bill would have a negative impact on the adolescents served by MDH at this facility by removing them from their school setting and placing them in a setting that would not address their needs. Additionally, it would disrupt their current schooling for whatever period of time until their charges are resolved. 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 or 443-826-1851.

Sincerely,

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

Attachment:
[as needed]