



March 3, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair House Appropriations
120 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: HB1559 - Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients
- Placement**

Dear Chairman Barnes:

As you know, Kennedy Krieger is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

We are deeply grateful for the Speaker's steadfast advocacy for children and youth, particularly her leadership in ensuring that young people are moved out of inappropriate placements and into settings where they can receive the care and support they need and deserve. We strongly support this legislation and her continued efforts to strengthen care coordination across systems.

In particular, we commend the creation of the Advisory Council on Maryland's System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families. Including specific language to study the New Jersey model is an important and promising step toward meaningful reform in Maryland. The New Jersey model integrates child welfare, behavioral health, and Medicaid services, and has demonstrated success in reducing out-of-home placements, decreasing emergency department utilization, and increasing engagement in outpatient treatment.

We also believe that New Jersey's "system integration model" of expanding access to "upstream" services, such as routine depression and anxiety screenings in primary care, school-based mental health programs, and other early intervention strategies, can significantly improve outcomes by supporting children and youth before challenges escalate into acute crises.

We stand ready and willing to participate in this and other new Advisory Councils and thank the legislature for their thoughtful consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bradley L. Schlaggar".

Bradley L. Schlaggar MD, PhD
President and CEO
Kennedy Krieger Institute