



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
121 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 715 – Algorithmic Addiction Fund – Establishment – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of information for House Bill (HB) 715 – Algorithmic Addiction Fund – Establishment.

HB 715 would establish the Algorithmic Addiction Fund (hereinafter “Fund”) administered by the Department. Monies in the Fund would be drawn from civil penalties received by the State from a judgement or settlement relating to claims of harm to children from the use of social media and improper use of algorithms and any appropriations directed to it from the State budget. Permissible uses of the Fund would include (1) conducting a needs assessment to determine where resources should be directed to prevent, intervene, and treat algorithmic addiction (“AA”); (2) improving access to services “proven” to treat the health effects associated with AA; (3) intervention services; (4) prevention services, including education campaigns to prevent AA; (5) research and training for AA treatment and prevention; and (6) supporting and expanding other “evidence-based” interventions for AA prevention and treatment.

HB 715 further requires the Department to develop key goals, objectives and performance indicators related to AA treatment and prevention efforts, to consult with AA treatment and prevention stakeholders, award grants from the Fund, and report annually on the expenditure of monies from the Fund; however, the bill makes no allowance for the administrative expenses associated with overseeing the Fund. After the Fund was used for the previously described activities, any unspent monies would be directed to the Department to be used for youth mental health services.

While the Department appreciates the legislation’s intent, particularly in light of the 2023 U.S. Surgeon General’s [Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#), we note that there is no diagnosis of “algorithmic addiction” included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM underlies

coverage of specialty behavioral health services in Maryland’s public behavioral health system with diagnoses tied to covered services in Code of Maryland Regulations 10.67.08 et seq. There are no evidence-based practices or methods “proven” to treat the health effects associated with social media use or algorithmic addiction. As far as the Department is aware, education campaigns to warn about excessive social media use, as well as limitations on internet use by parents or caregivers and schools, encouraging physical activity, and preventing social isolation are effective prevention interventions but there is no consensus about particular or proven treatments.¹ Given the lack of consensus, the Department anticipates significant work with stakeholders and experts to determine the best use of monies from the Fund.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at Meghan.Lynch@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D
Secretary of Health

¹ See, e.g., De, D., El Jamal, M., Aydemir, E., & Khera, A. (2025). Social Media Algorithms and Teen Addiction: Neurophysiological Impact and Ethical Considerations. *Cureus*, 17(1), e77145. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.77145> and Masri-Zada, T., Martirosyan, S., Abdou, A., et al. (2025). The Impact of Social Media & Technology on Child and Adolescent Mental Health. *Journal of psychiatry and psychiatric disorders*, 9(2), 111–130.