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HB 1559 – Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients - Placement

Position: **Support**

House Appropriations Committee & House Health Committee

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MedStar Health is the largest healthcare provider in the Maryland and Washington, D.C. region. MedStar Health offers a comprehensive spectrum of clinical services through over 500 care locations, including 10 hospitals, 33 urgent care clinics, ambulatory care centers and an extensive array of primary and specialty care providers. As a not-for-profit healthcare system, MedStar Health is committed to its patient-first philosophy, emphasizing care, compassion, and clinical excellence, supported by a dedicated team of more than 35,000 physicians, nurses, and many other clinical and non-clinical associates.

HB 1559 takes a comprehensive and essential approach to addressing systemic failures that leave medically cleared pediatric patients, those under the age of 22, in emergency departments or inpatient settings for prolonged periods because no appropriate placement exists. It also tackles the related problem of children residing in unlicensed settings when they should be in safe, licensed care.

One of the most challenging issues facing our health and child welfare systems is when a child is brought to the emergency department, stabilized, and no longer needs acute care, yet must remain in the hospital because there is nowhere appropriate to discharge or transfer the patient. Some children experience overstays measured in days, weeks, or months, sacrificing schooling, socialization, and access to needed therapeutic services while hospital beds and critical resources remain occupied.

HB 1559 improves how the state responds by establishing pediatric hospital overstay coordinators in both the Maryland Department of Health and the Department of Human Services. These coordinators will advocate on behalf of patients, maintain detailed data on each case, and ensure timely reporting to the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel established within the Governor's Office for Children.

The creation of a Child and Youth Placement Review Panel, led by an appointed Placement Manager, and a Rapid Response Placement Team ensures that children who have remained in a hospital for more than 72 hours after clearance are reviewed promptly. Panel membership is a blend of agency representatives and experts that will improve cross-system accountability and help identify the least restrictive, clinically appropriate placements. Importantly, HB 1559 prohibits placements in unlicensed settings within the out-of-home placement program. This change ensures that children are not left in motels, shelters, or other inappropriate environments simply because placement options are limited. The Maryland Hospital Association has proposed amendments to further clarify that hospitals are not appropriate out-of-home placements for youth.

Pediatric overstays and unlicensed placements are both symptoms of fragmented systems, limited capacity, and outdated administrative processes. HB 1559's structured coordination, data reporting, panel oversight, and rapid response mechanisms are necessary to protect this vulnerable population and improve outcomes for children and families across Maryland.

For the reasons above, MedStar Health urges a **favorable** report on **HB 1559**.

It's how we treat people.