



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

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Benjamin Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill (HB) 1559 – Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for House Bill 1559 – Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement. As introduced, this bill would prohibit the placement of children in unlicensed settings under the out-of-home placement program; alter the duties of the pediatric hospital overstay coordinators; establish the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel in the Governor’s Office for Children with the Placement Manager as its head; require the Placement Manager to convene a Rapid Response Placement Team under certain circumstances; establish the Advisory Council on Maryland’s System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families; establish the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families; and authorize the Governor to transfer positions and funds appropriated for positions from the Workgroup on Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstays to the Office; and generally relating to children in unlicensed settings and pediatric hospital overstay patients.

The Department agrees that pediatric hospital overstays can cause harm to young people and their families. Ensuring youth do not remain in hospitals beyond medical necessity requires an all-of-government response. Such a response requires the participation of multiple Maryland state agencies.

Regarding the bill’s establishment of a Placement Manager housed in the Governor’s Office for Children (§8–1403) (GOC): the Department agrees with the value of a point of contact in the Governor’s Office and concurs with GOC’s proposal of the creation of a new Senior Advisor for Children and Families position within the Office. This position would be a member of the various new entities described in the bill, and would ensure coordination among agencies on this issue. While this position would track case management processes to inform broader policy and systemic decisions, it would not oversee the management of each individual pediatric overstay case – nor

would the coordinators in the Department and the Department of Human Services (DHS) report all specific instances of a pediatric hospital overstay patient to the Senior Advisor. The pediatric overstay coordinators are senior level staff who work directly with the hospitals and other stakeholders to resolve challenges facing complex cases. To maintain patient confidentiality, they should not share individual-level information with anyone who is not essential to implementing the child's treatment plan.

Regarding the bill's establishment of the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel (§8-1402): The Department supports the creation of a Child and Youth Placement Review Panel and recommends the following membership for the review panel: MDH; DHS; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Juvenile Services; Maryland Department of Disabilities, and the Governor's Office for Children (represented by the proposed Senior Advisor). The Department recommends limiting panel participation to state agencies as a large panel with many external entities raises privacy and HIPAA-related concerns. However, the review panel may consult with individuals and organizations with relevant expertise as needed. The Department supports designating MDH and DHS as co-chairs of the review panel as the two agencies chiefly responsible for managing pediatric overstay cases.

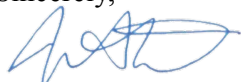
Regarding the convening of a Rapid Response Placement Team (§8-140): The Department supports the creation of a rapid response placement team and recommends the placement team be a sub-committee of the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel. The placement team should be co-chaired by the overstay coordinators at DHS and MDH.

Regarding the bill's creation of an Advisory Council on Maryland's System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families (§8-140) and the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families (§8-15): The Department supports the goals of these proposed councils. To support maximum efficiency in meeting these shared goals, the Department supports creating the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families, and merging duties of both councils into this one council. The Department recommends that the Senior Advisor for Children and Families in the Governor's Office for Children chair the interagency council.

The Department agrees with this bill's intended purpose to prevent pediatric overstays and better serve Maryland children. For these reasons, the Department supports HB 1559 with these proposed amendments and urges a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

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