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**Senate Bill 284 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2026  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
March 4, 2026  
Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

I am Celia Serkin, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Inc. (MC Federation of Families), a family peer-led support organization serving diverse families in Montgomery County who have children, youth, and/or young adults with mental health, substance use, or co-occurring challenges. MC Federation of Families has been providing family peer services to families in Montgomery County for 20 years. Our Family Peer Specialists are parents who have raised or are currently raising children with these challenges. I am a Montgomery County resident and have two children, now adults, who have struggled since childhood with behavioral health challenges. My son has debilitating depression. My daughter is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist who has lived experience with co-occurring challenges.

**MC Federation of Families supports SB 284 with amendments.** SB 284 alters and repeals certain required appropriations and makes a range of other statutory changes to reconcile and finance the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Maryland is again facing a daunting budget shortfall. It also is contending with unprecedented levels of uncertainty at the federal level. We understand the challenges state policymakers are facing and know that difficult decisions will have to be made.

As a family peer-led family support organization, we can attest that the need for mental health and substance use care has never been greater.

- More than 30% of Marylanders in need of counseling or therapy do not receive it, a rate that exceeds the national average.<sup>1</sup>
- Maryland's percentage of serious suicidal ideation among youth aged 12-17 is 5th highest in the nation.<sup>2</sup>
- According to data from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the state's 988 helpline received nearly 9,800 calls in September 2025, a 30% increase over the same period in 2024.
- Thankfully, overdose deaths are declining. However, there were still over 1,300 Marylanders who lost their lives to overdose in 2025.

Strategic investments to expand access to community- and school-based mental health care and strengthen Maryland's behavioral health workforce are necessary to address unmet needs and improve the health of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kff.org/interactive/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/maryland>

<sup>2</sup> Reinert, M, Nguyen, T & Fritze, D. (October 2025). "The State of Mental Health in America 2025." Mental Health America, Alexandria VA. <https://mhanational.org/the-state-of-mental-health-in-america>

Maryland residents. The state will save money by reducing preventable hospital emergency department utilization, homelessness, and criminal justice involvement.

**MC Federation of Families strongly opposes the provisions in SB 284 that would eliminate funding for critically important school- and community-based behavioral health services.**

**We urge you to REJECT the proposed \$20 MILLION (20%) annual reduction in school mental health funding (pg. 9, lines 6-15)** - The Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports provides mental health funding to public schools in every jurisdiction across the state. In FY26, the Consortium awarded \$97 million to 108 grantees in all of Maryland's jurisdictions. Grantees provided a range of behavioral health services, from prevention and early intervention to treatment for youth with more serious concerns. Last school year this funding supported over 136,000 students across nearly 90% of all public schools and resulted in improved mental health outcomes for 60-80% of those students.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the funding added over 700 new individuals to Maryland's school behavioral health workforce and was used to train nearly 6,000 school personnel in behavioral health practices to improve student outcomes. Early data from the current school year gives every indication that this program will continue to produce remarkable outcomes and a positive return on investment.<sup>4</sup>

SB 284 would reduce the annual budget of the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports from \$100 million to \$80 million. Reducing school mental health funding by 20% would be devastating for students and families across the state. Programs would be at risk of shutting down and investments made thus far would be lost to the detriment of Maryland's students. According to Maryland's most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS),

- 36% of Maryland high school students are persistently sad or hopeless
- 18% of high school students and 24% of middle school students have seriously considered suicide
- 10% of both high school students and middle school students have actually attempted suicide<sup>5</sup>

**We also urge you to REJECT language that weakens the state's commitment to expanding Maryland's network of certified community behavioral health clinics (CCBHCs) (pg. 42, lines 9-13)**

CCBHCs are federally designated care delivery models that provide a comprehensive range of outpatient mental health and substance use care, coordination with other providers and services, and connection to other systems and supports. Similar to federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), CCBHCs provide services regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

States implementing the model have seen increased access to care, reduced emergency room and inpatient utilization, mitigation of behavioral health workforce challenges, higher engagement post discharge from hospitals, and greater integration with physical care.

In 2023, the General Assembly passed legislation ([SB 362](#) | [HB 1148](#)) to establish a statewide network of CCBHCs. The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) has done considerable work over the past year engaging stakeholders and preparing for an eventual application to participate in the federal CCBHC demonstration program. The language in SB 284, however, would make the continuation of this initiative discretionary and leave the future of Maryland's CCBHC program in question.

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<sup>3</sup> [Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports Statewide Impact Report: March 2024-June 2025](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports Statewide Impact Report: July-September 2025](#)

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Department of Health 2022-2023 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey data. <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS-2022-2023.aspx>