



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

March 31, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for House Bill 1559 – Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement. As amended, HB 1559 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 (“coordinators”); establish the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel in the Governor’s Office for Children with the Senior Advisor as its head; require the coordinators to convene a Rapid Response Placement Team under certain circumstances; authorizing the Department of Human Services to execute an emergency procurement with certain providers under certain circumstances; and establish the Advisory Council on Maryland’s System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families.

The Department agrees that pediatric hospital overstay 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 Senior Advisor 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. This position would chair the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel and the Advisory Council and would ensure coordination among agencies on this issue.

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 supports 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 review panel may consult with individuals and organizations with relevant expertise as needed. The Department supports the Senior Advisor chairing the Children and Youth Placement Review Panel.

Regarding the convening of a Rapid Response Placement Team (§8-140) (RRPT), the Department supports the creation of a RRPT co-chaired by the overstay coordinators at DHS and MDH. The Department supports including the coordinators on every RRPT and including the Senior Advisor in an advisory capacity. If applicable, the RRPT will also include a representative of the local department of social services and a representative of the hospital where the child is considered a pediatric overstay patient.

Regarding the bill's creation of an Advisory Council on Maryland's System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families (§8-140), the Department supports the creation of the council and its membership with a wide diversity of stakeholders. 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 as amended 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meena Seshamani', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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