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Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Finance Committee
Maryland State Senate
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: SB 870 – Maryland Department of Health – Adolescent Psychiatric Inpatient Beds – Capacity in Prince George’s County and Report

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 870. This legislation requires the Maryland Department of Health, in consultation with the Prince George’s County Local Behavioral Health Authority, to ensure the establishment and ongoing operation of at least 24 licensed adolescent psychiatric inpatient beds in Prince George’s County.

In Prince George’s County, families facing a youth mental health emergency too often experience the same painful reality: there is nowhere local to go. When an adolescent needs inpatient stabilization, parents are left waiting for extended periods in emergency departments or traveling outside the county to find an available bed. That delay is not just inconvenient—it is destabilizing for children in crisis, exhausting for families, and it strains hospitals that are not designed to serve as long-term holding settings for psychiatric placement.

Hospitals across Maryland have documented how serious this has become. The Maryland Hospital Association has reported that children and youth are staying in emergency departments and inpatient units beyond medical necessity because the system cannot move them to the appropriate level of care. Hospitals have reported approximately 43 children stuck across Maryland, with nearly 20% in emergency departments, and an average length of stay after being cleared for discharge measured in weeks—not hours. These system failures don’t just affect behavioral health patients. They slow throughput, consume staffing resources, and reduce emergency capacity for every Marylander who needs timely care.

SB 870 is a practical, accountable solution. It sets a clear standard—24 beds in Prince George’s County—and a deadline for delivery. It also includes a clear backup plan: if the capacity cannot be delivered through expansion, the Department must procure the beds through an RFP to ensure implementation stays on schedule. Finally, the bill prioritizes access regardless of payer source, including Medicaid, so these beds are available to the families who need them most.

Maryland cannot credibly address the youth behavioral health crisis while leaving Prince George’s County without adolescent inpatient capacity. SB 870 is a focused step that delivers a measurable result for real families and strengthens our statewide hospital system.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 870.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alonzo T. Washington', written in a cursive style.

Alonzo T. Washington
Maryland State Senator
District 22