



HB724 - Employment Discrimination - Caregiver Status

Position: Support
Hearing Date: February 19, 2026
Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

The Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a child or other loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. As experienced caregivers, we provide support, guidance, and hope to people who love or care for someone with a behavioral health challenge and advocate to improve the systems they rely on.

Caregivers of children with behavioral health disorders are presented with a myriad of unique demands on their time, attention, and energy. In any given month, they may be required to take their child to weekly therapy sessions, doctors' appointments, and attend school meetings to discuss their child's school-based services. Pressure from schools to arrange doctor and therapy services after school so that the child doesn't miss classroom time leaves caregivers with limited options for appointments with community-based providers. Employed caregivers often have to miss work to ensure their child gets the services they need, adding more stress to families already experiencing significant challenges and threatening their financial wellbeing.

In MCF's 2026 Children's Behavioral Health Priorities Survey, more than 3,000 caregivers of children with behavioral health challenges were asked to identify the top 5 biggest barriers to their child receiving the services they need. Almost 40% of respondents indicated that the inability or difficulty of taking time off from work to attend appointments or school meetings presented a significant barrier. One respondent noted, "Families like mine are trying to do everything right, but the system is not built to support us. Children with mental and behavioral health needs are excluded from childcare, aftercare, and often pushed out of appropriate school supports, which leaves parents unable to work, risking job loss and financial instability." Another said, "The system expects parents to be full-time case managers, therapists, and educators while working jobs and caring for a household. That is not equity."

Caregivers of children with behavioral health challenges need and deserve workplace protections to ensure they are not discriminated against simply because of their caregiver status. For these reasons, MCF supports HB724.

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