

February 6, 2026

Testimony on HB71
Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program Services,
Reimbursement
Youth Psychiatric Rehabilitation Parity Act of 2026
Health Committee
February 10, 2026

POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

My name is Candace Vanderwater, President & CEO of VOA Chesapeake & Carolinas (VOACC). Since 2021, VOACC has offered psychiatric rehabilitation programs (PRP) to youth and families in Prince George's County. We currently serve 120 youth through our PRP services annually. While well-intentioned, HB71 does not offer a viable solution to the needs facing Maryland youth, and as drafted, it is likely to reduce access and weaken service quality.

HB71 requires Medicaid reimbursement to be tied to a minimum of 6 community psychiatric support services per month and allows billing up to 30 services per month for certain youth. This structure risks turning PRP into a numbers-based program rather than an individualized, medically necessary service. PRP is designed to provide lower-intensity rehabilitative support, matched to a youth's goals and readiness, as determined by a licensed mental health professional. A rigid minimum, without clear clinical justification, pressures providers to increase contacts, even when the increased frequency is inappropriate.

The bill also does not reflect real world delivery of youth services. Youth are in school most of the day and often have extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and other treatment appointments, making consistent, meaningful encounters challenging even under current requirements. Increasing the minimum from 2 to 6 contacts per month shifts the focus from clinically appropriate engagement to meeting a numeric threshold. That burden is amplified by community-based logistics across Prince George's County, where staff travel between schools, homes, and community locations and must manage cancellations, rescheduling, caregiver availability, and transportation time. Tripling required encounters is an operational change that multiplies travel and scheduling demands and pulls time away from higher-quality, goal-oriented work.

Sincerely,



Candace Vanderwater
Volunteers of America Chesapeake & Carolinas
President & CEO

Submitted by: Darrin Mitchell on behalf of Candace Vanderwater