

Favorable Position on SB870 – Adolescent Psychiatric Inpatient Capacity

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing as a Maryland constituent, healthcare professional, and special education advocate to express strong support for SB870.

This bill addresses a critical and ongoing gap in Maryland's behavioral health system: the lack of adequate adolescent psychiatric inpatient capacity, particularly in Prince George's County. In both my professional experience in healthcare systems and my work directly with families, I have seen the consequences of this shortage firsthand—youth remaining in emergency departments for extended periods, delays in appropriate placement, and increased strain on families navigating crisis without access to timely care.

SB870 takes an important step by requiring the establishment and ongoing operation of adolescent psychiatric inpatient beds and by prioritizing measurable capacity through the State's bed registry and referral systems. This is a necessary move away from acknowledging the problem toward building infrastructure to address it.

However, capacity alone is not sufficient. To ensure this bill delivers meaningful outcomes, I respectfully offer the following considerations:

- **Workforce Alignment:** Expansion of beds must be paired with adequate, qualified staffing to ensure safe and effective care delivery.
- **Continuity of Care:** Discharge planning and coordination with community-based and school-based supports are essential to prevent repeated crisis cycles.
- **Outcome Measurement:** Reporting should include not only capacity metrics but also indicators of treatment effectiveness, length of stay, and readmission rates.

These considerations are critical to ensuring that increased capacity translates into improved care and long-term stability for adolescents.

SB870 reflects a necessary investment in Maryland's behavioral health infrastructure. With thoughtful implementation, it has the potential to significantly reduce emergency department boarding, improve access to care, and better support youth and families during critical moments.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Alicia Renee
Maryland Constituent
Healthcare Professional & Special Education Advocate