

April 1, 2026

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the Health Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 60,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

Across our state, hospitals are grappling with severe pediatric psychiatric overstays and emergency department boarding pressures that leave our youth without timely access to necessary treatment. This is a crisis that leaves many vulnerable people languishing in settings that are ill-equipped to treat them.

We're seeing reductions in adolescent inpatient bed capacity. NAMI Maryland strongly advocates for increased bed capacity across the State and this report is a step in the right direction. The annual reporting requirement (until 2030) which will track bed capacity by county and identify staffing barriers, will provide the data needed to address the ongoing need to expand and strengthen the availability of behavioral health services for all Maryland children. Additionally, as amended, this bill requires MDH to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on resources, staffing parameters, treatment plans, and therapeutic environments that would ensure the best possible outcomes for adolescents receiving care in adolescent psychiatric inpatient beds.

We know that ensuring the State has adequate data about the need for psychiatric beds across the State will help inform the continued conversations as we look to increase capacity.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 870.

Stephanie Slowly-Little
Executive Director
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