

Written Testimony

House Bill 1092

Favorable with Amendments

The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross

Councilwoman At Large

City of Glenarden

Prince Georges County Maryland

Chair and Members of the Committee

I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1092 with amendments.

As a municipal leader serving in Prince Georges County, I have witnessed firsthand the consequences of inadequate adolescent psychiatric inpatient capacity. Families in crisis are often forced to wait in emergency departments for extended periods while appropriate placement is located. These delays create trauma for youth, strain hospitals, and increase pressure on local public safety and social service systems.

House Bill 1092 takes an important step by requiring the Maryland Department of Health to ensure the establishment and ongoing operation of at least 24 licensed adolescent psychiatric inpatient beds in Prince Georges County. The requirement that solutions be measurable through the State inpatient psychiatric registry reflects the type of accountability that local governments rely upon when planning for community health and safety.

Prince Georges County has experienced reductions in adolescent psychiatric inpatient service capacity. At the same time, our youth population remains significant and diverse. Municipal leaders must respond daily to families seeking assistance for behavioral health crises. The absence of adequate local inpatient capacity results in longer boarding times, delayed

stabilization, and unnecessary strain on emergency response systems.

While I strongly support the intent of this legislation, amendments are necessary to ensure effective implementation.

First, the bill should require interim milestones prior to the December 31 2028 operational deadline. Without measurable benchmarks beginning in 2027, families may continue to face extended delays in access to care.

Second, the Department should be required to coordinate with Prince Georges County government to address transportation and access barriers for families during inpatient placement. Access must include practical ability to reach and support youth during treatment.

Third, the Department should be required to submit a workforce recruitment and retention strategy specific to adolescent psychiatric services in Prince Georges County. Licensed beds alone do not ensure access if staffing shortages prevent full operation.

These amendments will strengthen accountability, reduce implementation risk, and ensure that the policy objective translates into real and timely access to care.

Our children deserve timely stabilization, appropriate treatment settings, and systems that do not leave them waiting in emergency departments during moments of crisis. Strengthening adolescent psychiatric inpatient capacity in Prince Georges County is not only a health policy issue. It is a public safety, family stability, and community resilience issue.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 1092.

Respectfully submitted

The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross

Councilwoman At Large

City of Glenarden

Prince Georges County Maryland