



### **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 Cari Guthrie, President and CEO of Cornerstone. Since 1971, Cornerstone has offered psychiatric rehabilitation programs (PRP) to youth and families in Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Montgomery Counties. We currently serve over 100 youth in our PRP services annually.

While well-intentioned, HB71 does not offer a viable solution to the needs facing Maryland youth. I certainly appreciate the intent behind this bill – Youth PRP is a need. PRP services are the key support that keeps youth and adults out of hospitals and jails. This bill does not help us improve services to our youth.

The bill triples the minimum required visits before a provider can be paid for serving a child but does not increase the reimbursement rate to compensate a provider for the increased level of effort. A caseload is 10 – 15 clients depending on their needs. Increasing the number of visits means that we will need more staff to serve the same number of clients. Hiring is already a huge issue and is the main reason that many of our programs have not recovered from COVID and do not meet their budgeted revenue targets. If you don't have the staff – you can't serve the clients and you can't bill the revenue. At the same time, the bill increases the maximum number of visits ten-fold and, if the bill were amended to require per-visit payments, a ten-fold increase in expenditures is unsustainable in the state's behavioral health budget.

Make no mistake: Maryland needs urgent fixes to its youth mental health services. According to a national ranking, Maryland ranks 40<sup>th</sup> in the country for its children's mental health system. Work is underway to address that problem, and this Committee can support cost studies and service reforms in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health, rate reform for child welfare services, and implementation of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model.

But if you want to reform the children's mental health system in Maryland, HB71 is not the right vehicle. I ask you to make an unfavorable report on this bill.