



## **HB655- Education - Student Behavior - Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)**

Position: Oppose  
Hearing Date: February 18, 2026  
Committee: Ways & Means

**The Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF)** is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a child or other loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. As experienced caregivers, we provide support, guidance, and hope to people who love or care for someone with a behavioral health challenge and advocate to improve the systems they rely on.

MCF opposes HB655 because it is vague, misguided, burdensome to families, and perpetuates the stigma that parents and caregivers are to blame for their child's mental health challenges.

HB655 does not define what is termed "violent and disruptive behavior." Without a definition, schools will have complete discretion in deciding which students and which behaviors would be considered "violent and disruptive" and opens the door for children with behavioral health disorders to be unduly prejudiced.

Counseling for students with certain types of disabilities is unproductive or counterproductive. For example, students who are nonverbal would not benefit from counseling. Being unable to communicate with the counselor could result in exacerbated behaviors. Further, if the behavior in question is the result of a behavioral health challenge not adequately or appropriately addressed by the student's Individualized Education Plan, parents and caregivers are penalized for the school's failure to provide adequate supports and services.

HB655 assumes that counseling services in the community would even be available to families. In MCF's 2026 Children's Behavioral Health Priorities Survey, more than 3,000 parents and caregivers across Maryland were asked to share their concerns about the services their child needs. More than 70% of respondents indicated that long waiting lists for services are keeping their children from getting the help they need, while 46% indicate that the costs of such services create a financial burden for the family. Thirty-seven percent of respondents identified being unable to take time from work to attend appointments as one the top 5 barriers keeping their child from getting the services they need. HB655 would unfairly stigmatize and penalize parents and caregivers for being unable to access the services their child needs to address their behavioral health concerns.

For these reasons, MCF opposes HB655.

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