



Maryland Association of
Resources for Families & Youth

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: February 9, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 286 – *Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications*

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is a statewide network of private agencies serving at-risk children and youth and advocates for a system of care in Maryland that meets the needs of children and families. MARFY is a program of Maryland Nonprofits and **supports** the passage of Senate Bill 286.

Crisis response services significantly reduce preventable behavioral health crises and offer earlier intervention to stabilize crises more quickly. Effective crisis response decreases avoidable incarcerations, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and readmissions. Senate Bill 286 proposes meaningful enhancements to Maryland's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System (BHCRS), including increased and extended funding for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program, a critical component of BHCRS. Senate Bill 286 also includes important requirements for crisis response services that will serve to minimize law enforcement interaction for individuals in crisis by expanding the use of 24/7 mobile crisis teams, which is a team including a licensed mental health professional and peer support specialist, to respond to people in crisis in the community, rather than having police respond.

Many children and families served by MARFY members suffer from behavioral health disorders. A vibrant and responsive crisis response system is critical to addressing the challenges these disorders can present. Effective crisis response will not only help those individuals overcome potentially life-threatening crises but will also reduce unnecessary emergency department use and police interaction. Passage of Senate Bill 286 will provide Maryland with a framework for a vastly improved crisis response system. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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