



SB 425 – Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Senate Finance Committee

Date: February 16, 2021

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for someone with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to parents and caregivers of young people with mental health issues and to any loved one who cares for someone with a substance use or gambling issue.

Maryland Coalition of Families strongly supports SB 425.

Children who have significant mental health needs often have experienced trauma in their lives. Studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) consistently show that children who have experienced four or more traumatic events, including physical or mental abuse, parental mental health or substance use problems, domestic violence, bullying, poverty, or community violence, to name a few, are at much greater risk of developing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders and suicidality. In addition, ACEs have been proven to have a profound negative impact on physical health.

Everyone knows that ACEs are bad. What is unclear is how to prevent them, how to track them, how to screen youth for them, and what to do with a positive screen. Maryland needs to address these multiple and complex questions related to ACEs, and SB 425 will help us to do just that. Establishing a workgroup with a broad mission is the best way to begin to take a public health approach to the debilitating effects of ACEs.

We know about treatment for trauma, and that it can be extremely effective. We must better understand the need for treatment in the population, how to identify youth in need of treatment, and how to connect them to appropriate resources.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report on SB 425.

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