



"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"

Testimony submitted to House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 16, 2021

**House Bill 132 – Health – Mental and Emotional Disorders – Consent
Mental Health Access Initiative**

Support

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a statewide network of Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) throughout the State of Maryland, supports House Bill 132, the Mental Health Access Initiative. YSBs provide prevention, intervention and treatment services to at-risk youth and work with many youth in crisis. This bill will increase access to mental health services by lowering the age limit for when a minor can seek mental health services.

This bill will allow a minor to seek help without parental consent while also continuing to allow the service provider the ability to notify parents and guardians based on their assessment and expertise. As providers who work with youth and their families, YSBs recognize the importance of parents and guardians in addressing mental health concerns of a youth. Allowing minors to seek treatment will remove a potential barrier and allow a trained mental health provider to assess the child and provide immediate assistance. Parents and guardians are often an important support and resource for the youth and vital to the youth's treatment. There are times however, when the practitioner may need to notify social services or provide other supports if abuse or harm to the child is suspected. This bill will take away a barrier and allow minors more access to mental health treatment while also maintaining the provider's ability to notify family and utilize this natural support system as appropriate.

We respectfully ask you to support this bill.

Respectfully Submitted:

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