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House Bill 1136 Human Services – Youth Services Bureaus – Funding (Youth Services Bureau Restoration Act)

House Appropriations Committee

March 7, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HB 1136.

HB 1136 would establish a stable funding source of \$4.8 million in the Governor's budget for Youth Services Bureaus (YSBs) and require that the Department of Human Services report to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the House Appropriations Committee evaluation data on the improvement of youth served by the YSBs, and outcomes as related to entry or re-entry into the Juvenile Services System.

In this time of heightened concern over juvenile crime and delinquency, YSBs serve a more important role than ever. As the Juvenile Reform bill winded its way through Senate and House hearings, legislators expressed tremendous concern about prevention and diversion services that would keep youth out of the DJS system, while providing them with the services that they and their families needed.

Maryland's Youth Service Bureaus fill this role. They provide effective juvenile delinquency diversion treatment to prevent youth from entering or re-entering the Juvenile Justice System. This includes individual, family and group counselling, prevention programs for drug and alcohol use disorder, and substance use disorder assessment and referral to treatment. YSBs not only work collaboratively with a youth and their parents, but also with teachers, school counsellors, community police officers, juvenile probation officers, foster care workers and/or health professionals, as needed, to create a wrap-around service approach.

Individual YSBs can provide a variety of additional services such as case management, tutoring, mentoring, violence risk assessments, parent groups, and school anger management groups.

The bill's requirement that outcomes data be annually reported to the legislature will ensure that funding only be sustained if the programs can be shown to have a positive impact.

For this reason, MHAMD supports HB 1136 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, please contact Ann Geddes at (443) 926-3396