



Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee

FAVORABLE

**Senate Finance Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

**SB 656 Children – Residential Treatment Centers – Education Funding
Submitted by
Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee**

February 22, 2022

Senator Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and the Respected Members of the Finance Committee:

The Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) is pleased to support SB 656 Children – Residential Treatment Centers – Education Funding.

MHAC was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive and the County Council on matters concerning mental health. Our work includes providing citizen oversight to all state-funded mental health agencies serving Montgomery County and serving as an advocate for a comprehensive mental health system for persons of all ages. The Committee helps to ensure that publicly-funded mental health services are responsive to local needs, accountable to the citizenry and accessible to those in need. Our work includes closely following State and County legislative proposals relating to mental health. MHAC is comprised of citizen members who serve three-year terms without compensation that includes practicing physicians in the County, mental health professionals in the County who are not physicians and individuals who are currently receiving or have in the past received mental health services as well as agency members that includes the Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public schools, and the Department of Juvenile Services.

SB 656 Children – Residential Treatment Centers – Education Funding authorizes certain core service agencies, local behavioral health authorities, and local addictions authorities to approve certain funding for certain youths' educational costs incurred during admission to residential treatment centers under certain circumstances.

This bill eliminates the inequitable way that youth without nonpublic placement on their IEPs or not in special education have been treated when needing to be placed in an RTC

for clinical reasons. This bill allows youth without a nonpublic placement on their IEPs or not in special education who are clinically indicated for an RTC placement to be approved through the **same** Core Service Agency/Local Behavioral Health Authority process that youth with a nonpublic placement on their IEPs use. State general funds can be used to pick up the educational costs. The parents of the youth without a nonpublic placement on their IEPs or not in special education will no longer have to go through a VPA. They will not have to pay child support, go through a home study, or appear in the court. Their youth will not enter foster care.

We strongly urge you to support this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Helga Luest".

Helga Luest
Chair, Mental Health Advisory Committee