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House Appropriations Committee

House Health Committee

March 3, 2026

House Bill 1559 – *Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement*

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 1559.

House Bill 1559 is comprehensive child-welfare legislation that seeks to end the practice of placing children in unlicensed settings (such as hotels, shelters, office buildings, and similar environments) as part of out-of-home placement by the Social Services Administration by expressly prohibiting such placements under the State’s out-of-home placement program. The bill revises and clarifies the duties of pediatric hospital overstay coordinators by requiring coordinated reporting and data collection on children who remain in hospital settings beyond medical necessity and redirects those duties through a newly established Child and Youth Placement Review Panel within the Governor’s Office for Children. It creates structures to improve placement outcomes through a Placement Manager, a Rapid Response Placement Team, and an Advisory Council on Maryland’s System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families, as well as an Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families, all designed to strengthen oversight, ensure appropriate placements, and improve data sharing and interagency coordination for children awaiting licensed care. The bill also authorizes transfer of positions and funds from the existing Workgroup on Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstays to support these new bodies and functions.

Protecting children in vulnerable settings requires collaboration across health, education, child welfare, and licensing authorities. The Workgroup in its deliberations underscored the importance of formalized coordination among relevant agencies. House Bill 1559 supports this recommendation by clarifying roles and strengthening communication pathways to ensure children do not fall through regulatory gaps.

From a physician perspective, the stakes are high. Children placed in settings lacking adequate safeguards face increased risks of physical injury, untreated medical conditions, exposure to trauma, and unmet behavioral health needs. Policies that promote consistent oversight and basic safety standards are not merely regulatory improvements they are public health protections.

House Bill 1559 reflects a thoughtful, evidence-informed response to the concerns identified by the Workgroup on Children in Unlicensed Settings. It translates consensus recommendations into practical statutory language that will better protect Maryland’s most vulnerable children. For these reasons, MedChi respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1559.

For more information call:

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