

October 28, 2025

The Honorable Westley
Moore
Governor
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

The Honorable Dr. Meena
Seshamani
Secretary
MD Department of Health
201 W. Preston Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

The Honorable Rafael
Lopez
Secretary
MD Department of Human
Services
25 South Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-3330

Re: Mental Health Resources for Children and Adolescents in Prince George's County – A Call for Action in Response to the Tragic Death of a Prince Georgian Minor in Baltimore

Dear Governor Moore, Secretary Seshamani and Secretary Lopez,

As reported by [The Baltimore Banner](#), on September 22, a 16 year old Prince Georgian with severe mental health issues died alone in an East Baltimore Hotel while being under the supervision of the Maryland Department of Human Services. This death is unacceptable and should never have happened.

This tragedy highlights a lack of mental health services for children and adolescents with severe mental health concerns. Specifically, there are no inpatient children/adolescent psychiatric care beds in Prince George's County; there are also no long-term residential mental health treatment for children and youth in the County. Even outside the County lines, there are severe barriers to accessing these critical mental health services anywhere in the state of Maryland.

Bringing inpatient children/adolescent psychiatric care beds to the County is a shared responsibility. Prince George's County Government will continue to work on identifying options to establish inpatient children/adolescent psychiatric care beds, and we request your support to:

- ***Request:*** Help bring inpatient children/adolescent psychiatric care beds to Prince George's County by creating incentives and ensuring financial sustainability for these critical services and supporting additional hospital beds to meet this need once such Certificate of Need application is made by a health care professional that can provide child/adolescent inpatient mental health care.

As demonstrated by this recent tragedy, it is extremely difficult for Prince George's County residents to access much-needed Residential Treatment Center (RTC) services. In Maryland, an RTC is defined as "*a psychiatric institution that provides campus-based intensive and extensive evaluation and treatment of children (5 to 12 years) and adolescents (13 to 17 years) with severe and chronic emotional disturbances who require a self-contained*

*therapeutic, educational, and recreational program in a residential setting*¹.” The Maryland Health Care Commission’s [*White Paper: Residential Treatment Center Services*](#) published in March 2025 identifies significant barriers to accessing RTC services, including:

- With the closure of 4 RTC facilities since 2016, the remaining 6 facilities represent a significant decrease in the bed capacity. Furthermore, not all licensed beds are staffed: in 2025 RTCs had 360 licensed bed capacity, 264 physical beds available and only 239 beds were reported as staffed.
- Some of these RTC beds are available only to the youth of certain ages and gender.
- Many youths have such complex needs that some RTCs may not want to admit them due to large operating losses associated with caring for such difficult patients. RTCs have also reported increase in application denials for youth with very complex needs.
- The White Paper highlights that “*Youth with the most complicated physical, emotional, psychiatric, and educational needs*² are placed in out-of-state RTCs” primarily because of shortage of hardware-secured beds for males and staff-secured beds for females in Maryland. Out of State placements are not keeping up with the demand for service, and cause children to be separated far from their parents; further, parents typically have to pay outrageous sums for out of pocket care out of state.
- While the daily census has fallen to 187.1 in CY 2024, the number of referrals rose to 846 in CY 2024, showing a tremendous gap between the need for services and ability to meet it.
- The wait time to access RTC services is cited in report as 69-day average (range of 0 to 259 days), but Prince George’s County advocates estimate the wait time to be around 6 months. Most of the youth who require RTC services cannot safely wait, the need for the services is oftentimes urgent.
- Despite the clear need for an increased capacity of RTC services there appears to be no incentives currently in place to support expansion of RTC services and existing reimbursement model precludes RTCs from accepting all, including most complex, patients. Lack of incentives is further demonstrated by the lack of applicants seeking to establish new RTC in Maryland over the past years.

The lack of availability and accessibility of RTC services is most likely why a Prince George’s County adolescent was placed in the state custody through the Department of Human Services and stayed alone in a hotel in Baltimore City with a contracted-out personal aide as opposed to a secure self-contained therapeutic environment that

¹ MD. Health – General § 19-301 (2022)

² These include youth with sexual offenses, aggressive or violent behaviors, fire starting behaviors, low IQ, co-occurring developmental disabilities or substance use disorders, and those with self-injurious behaviors.

hospitals and RTCs ought to provide to youth with acute and/or chronic mental health needs. In the light of this horrid tragedy, we urge you to:

- *Request:* Revamp the RTC program to ensure its financial and operational sustainability and expand the program's capacity to ensure that needs of all children and adolescents are met. Consider expanding capacity of the existing RTCs and adding a Center in Prince George's County or a nearby jurisdiction.

Furthermore, Prince George's County parents whose children have severe mental illnesses in a desperate need to secure any assistance for their children should not have to resort relinquishing custody to the State in hopes that a "Voluntary Placement Agreement" will increase chances of accessing much needed services.

- *Request:* Consider making RTC services more accessible without DHS or DJS referrals. Allowing patients with private insurance, along with those who have Medicaid, may help improve financial sustainability of RTCs.

Thank you for your attention to this call for action.

Sincerely,

Edward P. Burroughs, III
Chair
Prince George's County Council

CC:

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

Senator Michael A. Jackson, Chair, Prince George's County Delegation

Delegate Nicole Williams, Chair, Prince George's County House Delegation

Mr. Brian L. Wilbon, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Health, Human Services & Education, Office of the County Executive for Prince George's County

Dr. Jacqueline Somerville, Acting Health Officer, Prince George's County Health Department