



# Maryland Coalition of Families Advocacy Action Alert

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## A Message from Christi Green, MCF's Executive Director



Today is the day! The 2024 Maryland General Assembly is back in session and the legislative season has begun!

**Advocacy is an important component of MCF's mission.** Family peer support provided by our incredible staff who have personal experience and expertise is only half our mission. The other half is bringing family voice into conversations to advocate for policy and legislative initiatives that positively impact people with mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorders and those who love them.

During the 2024 Maryland General Assembly legislative session, there will be bills proposed that are of interest to MCF and the families we support. Below is a list of just a few we know are on the horizon as of today.

- **Fund Maryland 988 Campaign:** 988 was established in 2022 to answer behavioral health crisis calls. Our partners at **Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore** are championing a bill that will add a 25 cent telecom fee intended to provide long-term funding for 988.
- **Legal Action Bill:** Our partners at **Disability Rights Maryland** are putting forth a bill that will ensure low-income individuals have access to advocacy or legal support for issues related to special education services.
- **Utilization Review:** this bill supported by the Parity Coalition will require transparency from insurers to explain why a mental health or substance use claim is denied.
- **Maryland Age-Appropriate Design Code:** **Public Policy Partners** is proposing legislation to ensure that online products our children and teens use every day are safe by design and default.

- **Annual Mental Wellness Checkup:** also put forth by Public Policy Partners, this bill would require insurance companies to cover annual mental wellness checkups just like yearly physical exams.
- **Children's Mental Health Diagnosis:** In collaboration with Public Policy Partners, [Inseparable](#) is proposing a bill that would require Medicaid to cover mental health services provided to a young person without needing to give a diagnosis at the initial visit.
- **Accessing Narcan:** this bill put forth by Public Policy Partners and [The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence](#) would require insurance companies to cover the cost of over-the-counter Narcan, a life-saving medication for people in the midst of an opioid overdose.

These are only a few of the bills we're keeping our eye on. Through these periodic Advocacy Action Alerts, we'll keep you updated on their progress and highlight opportunities where you can get involved.

In the meantime, we want to hear from [YOU!](#)

- What bills do you want to know more about?
- Do you want to get involved in advocacy efforts including testifying either in writing or orally in Annapolis?
- Is there a bill that you want MCF to consider supporting or opposing?

Our **Policy and Advocacy Associate, Ashley Tauler**, is available to answer questions or discuss our advocacy work further.



[Email Ashley](#)

MCF strives to represent the voice of Maryland's families in Annapolis! Please don't hesitate to reach out if there is anything you want us to know!

And when we know more about the status of the legislation outlined above and other bills that may be introduced, we'll send another Advocacy Action Alert! Stay tuned!

Thank you!

*Christi*

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