

Senate Bill 1000 - House Bill 1300
Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation

February 16, 2020

Support with Amendment

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 1000/HB 1300, which will transform our public educational system in Maryland. We have great appreciation for the work of the Kirwan Commission. However, we would respectfully ask that the behavioral health recommendations contained within the Commission's report have funding attached to them.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with thousands of Marylanders children each year, we recognize that students succeed in the classroom when their social and emotional needs are also being met.

Catholic Charities provides school based behavioral health services in approximately 140 public schools in Anne Arundel County, Allegany County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Frederick County, Harford County, and Washington County. We use a model where our clinicians are based out of an outpatient mental health clinic and then are assigned to schools in the vicinity of the clinic. Most appointments take place directly at the school, but when schools are closed or unavailable we can continue services at the nearby clinic. In some areas, we are also able offer telehealth services.

It is our experience that offering behavioral health services in the schools has a positive impact on the student and the school community. We have seen fewer classroom disruptions, better grades, fewer disciplinary actions and improved attendance.

The single funding source for our services (with the exception of services provided in Baltimore City) is Medicaid. We are able to bill Medicaid directly for 1:1 therapy sessions. This model has two huge limitations 1) we can only service students who are covered by Medicaid and 2) we are only able to provide Medicaid approved services. However, in Baltimore City where there is wrap-around grant funding, our therapists become an integral part of the school community. They can dedicate time to providing consultations to teachers, observing classroom behavior, offering classroom presentations and other services.

The National Center for School Mental Health (which is housed at the University of Maryland) offered suggestions to the Kirwan Commission on what a robust school based mental health program could look like. The Commission adopted the recommendations, however, the Commission only funded some of the recommendations and erroneously indicated that the remainder could be funded with existing resources. Resources do not currently exist to efficiently serve the non-Medicaid population and to provide robust prevention, promotion and intervention services.

We respectfully request that the committees include full funding of the provisions included in the January 2019 Interim Report. We also suggest including requirements to create a uniform district and state level data measurement system to track the outcomes of expanded service.

On behalf of the families and individuals we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report with amendments for SB 1000/HB 1300.

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy