



February 17, 2020

**Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committees
House Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT with AMENDMENT OF SB 1000/HB 1300- The Blueprint for Maryland's
Future-Implementation**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving nearly 75,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as "behavioral health") annually.**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore is in support of SB 1000/HB 1300 The Blueprint for Maryland's Future-Implementation. This bill establishes The Blueprint for Maryland's Future as State education policy, based on the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

Mental illness and substance use among children are important behavioral health issues that significantly impact children, families, and communities. Behavioral health conditions children and youth experience can tie into major problems found in schools such as chronic absence, low achievement, disruptive behavior and dropping out. Early intervention and access to behavioral health services in Maryland schools will provide students with the resources needed to achieve academic success.

As a member of the Maryland Children's Behavioral Health Coalition (CBHC), we are pleased at the increased attention being paid to the behavioral health needs of Maryland schoolchildren. In 2018, the CBHC developed and presented a series of recommendations to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education highlighting the connection between increased school behavioral health supports and improved student outcomes, which included increased training for school personnel, the scaling of school behavioral health services in all jurisdictions, systematic screening and identification of student needs and a statewide system of accountability and outcome measurements. The Commission adopted the recommendations in the 2019 January Interim Report.

BHSB is appreciative of the inclusion of the recommendations in the bill. We urge full funding of the provisions to increase behavioral health supports and also request that accountability and data collection be part of the bill.

As the legislature works to fund strategies recommended in the Kirwan report, we must remember that education only works if children are healthy enough to learn. As such, **BHSB urges a favorable report with amendment on SB 1000 and HB 1300**