



Testimony on HB 1121
Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder
Registry and Referral System
House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 26, 2020
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland is the professional organization for providers of community-based mental health and substance use disorder treatment services. Our members serve the majority of the almost-300,000 children and adults who access care through the public behavioral health system. We provide outpatient treatment, residential and day programs, case management and assertive community treatment (ACT), employment supports, and crisis intervention.

We support the development of a registry to facilitate referrals for mental health and substance use disorder services across the system. This will be a complicated endeavor, given the various levels of care, types of individuals served, and payers accepted, so it is critical that providers have a seat at the design table and are able to update information on a real-time basis.

Payer mix is one of the most complicated factors in establishing a referral system. Community-based behavioral health programs often accept only Medicaid due to the comprehensive benefits package and rates that tend to be higher than both Medicare and commercial insurance. Some providers may also accept commercial insurance for limited types of services and locations (depending on credentialing with the various carriers). Medicare's behavioral health benefit is notoriously narrow in terms of coverage for community mental health and substance use disorder treatment, so many types of services are not available to Medicare recipients or are available only on a limited basis. These nuances involving payer mix must be grappled with if the referral system is to work as envisioned.

In order to ensure that payer mix is included in the design, we suggest the following amendments:

On p. 4, lines 10 and 11, amend to read as follows:

- (i) Tracks inventory of services by type, location, organization, AND PAYERS ACCEPTED;**
and

We urge a favorable report for HB 1121 with these amendments.