



February 26, 2020

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

HB 1121 Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is 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 disorder) 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 behavioral health service needs.

BHSB supports HB 1121 Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System, with an amendment to add local behavioral health authority to the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System Committee.

Proposed Amendment

On page 3, line 18, after "SERVICES," add: "(VI) ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM A LOCAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AUTHORITY"

Justification: HB 1121 would create a registry and referral tool that would help to improve care coordination between the PBHS and hospital systems as well as, system accountability for behavioral health providers delivering services in the community. LBHAs are responsible for system management and oversight of the public behavioral health system (PBHS). LBHAs are the "on the ground" experts, as they understand the behavioral health needs of their community and what services are available, and they use this expertise to structure the safety net to meet the unique needs of our community. They are also the only entity that has connections to other local systems, such as law enforcement, schools, DSS, and courts to ensure there is broad access to behavioral health services in the community.

Given that the LBHAs play a vital role in ensuring system accountability, we strongly request their representation on the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System Committee. **As such, BHSB urges the Health and Government Operations Committee to support HB 1121 with this amendment to add "local behavioral health authority."**