

HB 1222_Public Health - Baltimore City Behavioral

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March 30, 2022

**Senate Finance Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB 1222 Public Health - Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team

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) 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 over 77,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

BHSB supports HB 1222 Public Health—Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team. This legislation would support Baltimore City to meet the behavioral health requirements of the 2017 Consent Decree between the City of Baltimore and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) by establishing a Behavioral Health Incident Review Team in Baltimore City that is responsible for assessing law enforcement response to behavioral health crisis situations.

BHSB works closely with the City of Baltimore, the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), the DOJ, and members of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team to address the behavioral health requirements in the Consent Decree. BHSB co-chairs the Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee (CPIC) and its four sub-committees, which are made of various stakeholders who inform the work: advocacy groups, provider organizations, juvenile/criminal justice partners, Baltimore City representatives, consumers, and family members. The central aim of our collaborative work is to decrease interactions between people with behavioral health disorders and police.

The Behavioral Health Incident Review Team would create a dedicated forum for key stakeholders to review BPD’s interactions with city residents who experience a behavioral health crisis and recommending changes that will lead to modifications in police operations. HB 1222 is needed to allow for the sharing of mental health and substance use data from the public behavioral health system among partners on the Behavioral Health Incident Review Team. **As such, BHSB urges the Senate Finance Committee to support HB 1222.**

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BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB 1222

March 30, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations

RE: HB 1222 - Public Health - Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1222.

HB 1222 establishes the Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident (BHCI) Review Team to examine behavioral health crises that involve interaction with law enforcement in Baltimore City. The Review Team will recommend and assist with procedural, logistical, and clinical changes in order to minimize the need for law enforcement during behavioral health crises.

In April 2017, the City of Baltimore entered into a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to resolve DOJ's findings that it believed the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) had engaged in a pattern and practice of conduct that violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. One section of the decree dealt specifically with response to behavioral health crises, whereby the City agreed "to conduct an assessment to identify gaps in the behavioral health service system, recommend solutions, and assist with implementation of the recommendations as appropriate."

The goals of the assessment were:

- to analyze a sample of police interactions with people with behavioral health disabilities to identify systemic barriers and solutions; and
- for the Public Behavioral Health System (PBHS) at large, to identify gaps in behavioral health services, problems with the quality or quantity of existing services, and other unmet needs that in turn can lead to preventable criminal justice system involvement.

Defining what policing looks like for a community is the most consequential decision any local government can make. It is clear that the status quo solutions for policing, public safety, and addressing the needs of those experiencing behavioral health crises simply are not providing the best outcomes for our residents. The urgency of this moment demands coordination across different agencies and local partners. The City has developed the Gap Analysis Implementation Plan to address the recommendations identified within the PBHS Gap Analysis Report. This plan aligns with the requirements of our consent decree and demonstrates a commitment to address these gaps in our public behavioral health system. The implementation provides an opportunity to transform the behavioral health landscape in Baltimore City and truly provide the resources and support those experiencing behavioral health crisis need.

Encounters with people in behavioral health crises that began as non-criminal in nature too frequently result in a use of force or the individual's further involvement in the criminal justice system. Behavioral health crises that involve the Baltimore Police Department sometimes result in serious injuries or other adverse outcomes – incidents that point to systemic errors and present learning opportunities for all stakeholders to improve service delivery. Most police encounters with people who have behavioral health needs do not entail such outcomes and may be regarded, incorrectly, as routine, or benign. In fact, these encounters with police may be traumatizing to the individual and may reinforce negative stereotypes about people with behavioral disabilities. They also represent an unnecessary draw on police resources. In either instance, these encounters do not occur in isolation; there are manifold “root causes” and precipitating factors that lead to an individual encountering law enforcement. As such, it is critical to conduct BHCI Reviews that include the participation of key decision-makers within the city's public behavioral health system to promptly identify where an individual was not adequately served, and how such encounters may be avoided in the future.

These BHCI Reviews will serve to inform continuous improvement in service delivery by reviewing the system and identifying trends and gaps in systems of care and will establish recommendations and implement change as necessary to improve the crisis care experience. This legislation would allow for sharing of necessary data amongst the entities named in order to promptly and effectively identify where a resident was not served – or not adequately served – resulting in police involvement in crisis intervention, and how such encounters may be avoided in the future.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 1222.

MPA Testimony 2022 - Support - HB1222 - Senate Hea

Uploaded by: Pat Savage

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March 30, 2022

The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Bill: HB1222 - Public Health – Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team

Position: Support

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT for HB1222 - Public Health – Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team** – which would establish a Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team in Baltimore City including law enforcement and other stakeholders. We would also like bring to your awareness a point of information, we would like to see the opportunity for psychologists to be involved and for that to be included.

We applaud and fully support the Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team and its goals to identify the root causes and patterns within and public systems that result in behavioral health crisis involving law enforcement. Moreover, the Incident Review Team's objective of using that information to provide recommendations based on the identified factors and assist in implementing those recommendations will hopefully bring about valuable systemic change.

For these reasons, MPA urges the committee to **favorably report on HB1222 - Public Health – Baltimore City Behavioral Health Crisis Incident Review Team and would like to see psychologists included.** If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., J.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs