



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.**