

TO: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
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Johns Hopkins University and Medicine urges a **favorable** report on **HB517 Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care – Establishment**. This bill would create the Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care to assist Maryland residents in accessing mental health and substance use disorder services throughout the State. The program would address insurance-related barriers to receiving these services.

Johns Hopkins has significant expertise in research and treatment of behavioral health disorders, offering a broad range of intensities of services and modalities of care. Our Department of Psychiatry is consistently ranked among the very top programs in the United States for clinical care according to U.S. News and World Report. Other departments at Johns Hopkins deliver primary care integrated with buprenorphine treatment to persons with opioid use disorder. Across The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, we provide care through more than 275,000 inpatient and outpatient visits annually. As one of the largest behavioral health providers in the state, we witness firsthand the devastating impact these disorders have on individuals, families and communities. We also have thorough and knowledge of how important accessing behavioral health services are to Marylanders and truly how insurance can create a true barrier to accessing care.

The Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care creates a vital resource for our most vulnerable Marylanders to be connected with the care they need most. The “hub-and-spoke” model described in the legislation is an effective way to leverage pre-existing resources that will be able to quickly connect patients in need with care.

For these reasons and more, Johns Hopkins urges a favorable report on HB517.