



## Testimony on HB129

### ***Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services and Public Safety Answering Points – Modifications***

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Given the amount of behavioral healthcare needs in Maryland, we are supportive of HB108-Behaviiral Health Crisis Response Services.

Before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, many residents in the state of Maryland have and continue to suffer from behavioral health issues, many of which that go unidentified and/or untreated. Many residents are either lack the financial means or are just unaware of the resources at their disposal to tackle and combat behavioral health challenges. To make matters worse, Black and Brown communities are most commonly the ones that suffer the most due to an increased amount of healthcare disparities.

All Marylanders deserve access to behavioral health services and that is exactly what this legislation provides. If enacted, it would allow for an increase in behavioral health units by which localities can implement in need-based regions that suffer from high rates of behavioral abuse including but not limited to, high rates of alcoholism, high and increased crime rates, and poverty-stricken areas. These instances are leading contributors to increased amounts of behavioral health problems and most often, area also areas with a lack of resources. Moreover, this legislation would allow assistance in police activity by which residents who often commit crimes due to behavioral health issues, could find assistance and support in dealing with these issues.

For our members, this also creates great opportunity to lessen the workload that oversaturates our healthcare industry due to behavioral health issues. Moreover, this would also assist our members and the public by aiding in dealing traumatizing such as loss due to COVID-19 and other major life-threatening or traumatic instances.

For this reason, we believe that this legislation will create the necessary structure in place to improve overall health equity for Marylanders and ask that you support HB129.

Respectfully,

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