



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 517

DATE: February 23, 2022

SPONSOR: Delegate R. Lewis

ASSIGNED TO: Health and Government Operations

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey (leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care – Establishment

House Bill 517 creates a collaborative program between the University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work Center for Addiction Research, Education and Services (the “incubator” entity under the bill); a private, community-based non-profit organization or public university located in Maryland (the “hub” entity); and private, community-based non-profit organizations located in eight regions across the state (the eight “spoke” entities). The incubator and hub entities administer the Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care (the Program) and its funding; under the bill, the Governor is required to appropriate \$1M for the Program for fiscal years 2024-2026 and the Program may seek additional private or public funding. The Program is a three-year pilot to utilize a hub and spoke model to help consumers, both uninsured and those with private or public insurance, and health care providers navigate and resolve issues related to health plan enrollment and coverage, consumer access to mental health and substance use disorder services, and enforcement of rights under mental health parity laws.

Montgomery County supports House Bill 517 because it will better enable residents to access mental and behavioral health care. In 2018, the Maryland General Assembly enacted Chapter 211 which directed the Maryland Department of Health to study the hub and spoke model of service delivery for opioid use disorder. The study resulted in a report¹ that recommended a three year pilot program that would be sufficiently comprehensive, not duplicative of existing services, and complements existing treatment infrastructure. House Bill 517 incorporates many of the recommendations of the Chapter 211 report while expanding beyond a focus on treatment solely for opioid use disorder to all mental and behavioral health care and emphasizes seeking insurance enrollment as well as technical assistance with troubleshooting issues relating to coverage for mental and behavioral health treatment. Montgomery County supports the intent of the bill to coordinate a state-wide response to gaps in access to mental health and substance use disorder services and ensure that all residents are able to access needed health care.

Montgomery County respectfully urges a favorable Committee report on House Bill 517.

¹ https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmt_e_testimony/2020/fin/4958_03162020_84625-182.pdf