



February 7, 2023

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 48 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Collaborative Care Model Services –
Implementation and Reimbursement Expansion*

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, crisis response, and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 78,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore strongly supports HB48 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Collaborative Care Model Services – Implementation and Reimbursement Expansion. HB48 will improve the quality of behavioral health care delivered in primary care settings for Maryland Medicaid recipients by expanding their access to the proven Collaborative Care Model (CoCM).

CoCM is an evidence-based approach for integrating physical and behavioral health care in primary care settings, which is where most people with mild to moderate behavioral health conditions first seek care. The model uses a team-based approach to deliver (1) care coordination and management; (2) regular monitoring and treatment; and (3) systematic behavioral health caseload reviews and consultation. This combination of behavioral health support and consultation in primary care settings is effective. Over 80 randomized controlled trials have shown CoCM to be effective at improving health outcomes and lowering costs through a reduction in unnecessary hospitalization and higher intensity levels of care.

Integrating behavioral health care management into primary care would be beneficial to the residents of Baltimore City and its public behavioral health system. The impact of pandemic related isolation and disruption continues to manifest in higher rates of anxiety and depression, especially among young people. Over 2/3 of people seeking care for depression and other moderate mental health challenges go first to their primary care physician. Better support for primary care-behavioral health integration will address behavioral health needs before they become crises.

Commercial health insurers in Maryland and Medicare are already reimbursing providers for delivering care through this model. Maryland Medicaid also has an ongoing CoCM pilot program. The Medicaid pilot has demonstrated “clinically significant improvement” in depression and anxiety symptoms for more than 65 percent of participants. It is time to move beyond the pilot and join the 20+ other states that are providing CoCM broadly to their Medicaid recipients.

This bill will improve behavioral health outcomes, save money, and keep people out of crisis. **BHSB urges the House Health and Government Operations to pass HB48.**

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