

SB 201
Maryland Medical Assistance and Children's Health Insurance Program
School-based Behavioral Health Services - Reimbursement

Finance Committee

February 7, 2023

Favorable with Amendment

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports SB 201 with amendment. SB 201 has the laudable goal of increasing school based behavioral health services by allowing schools to bill Medicaid for certain services.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors.

Catholic Charities provides school based behavioral health services in approximately 100 public schools. We see everyday the value of offering psychotherapy in the school setting. We also see the value of having those therapists connected to an outpatient mental health clinic that can provide additional services outside of the school setting including psychiatric rehabilitation, family therapy, and medication management. The clinics are also able to provide services for 12 months a year. The school provides a starting point to this range of services. Over the past decade, the local educational authorities have encouraged expanding these partnerships. Through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the state reinforced the importance of these partnerships by appropriating \$85 million per year for community partnerships.

SB 201 takes a different approach to providing services in the schools. We understand that the bill is intended to be complimentary. However, as a community provider, we have concerns that as written it could have the unintended consequence of decreasing community partnerships and thereby decreasing access to the myriad of supports that come with attachment to an outpatient mental health clinic.

Specifically, our concerns are:

- 1) The workforce shortage has already been devastating for our clinics. While we are constrained by Medicaid billing rates, schools can pay higher salaries and offer 10-month positions. Increasing the number of school-employed positions, will decimate the hiring abilities of outpatient clinics.
- 2) When an outpatient mental health clinic places a clinician in a school, the clinician relies on referrals from the school to build their caseload. Unless there are enough referrals for both practitioners, there is a concern that the school will prioritize its own employee making it impossible for the clinic to support a community provider in the school.
- 3) Medicaid has complicated billing rules that do not allow for multiple services to be billed on the same day. If a student is seeing a school-employed clinician and then has an appointment later in the day at the outpatient clinic for medication management – Medicaid will only pay one claim. Neither biller will know until a claim is denied.

For the reasons stated above, we propose the following amendments, which aim to mitigate any unintended consequences.

Page 2, Line 24 Insert

(5) LICENSED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS EMPLOYED BY A MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER PROGRAM LICENSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 7.5-401 OF THIS ARTICLE.

Page 3, Line 5 Insert

F) MONEY EXPENDED IN CONNECTION WITH THE STATE PLAN AMENDMENT FOR CARRYING OUT THE PURPOSE OF THIS BILL IS SUPPLEMENTAL TO AND IS NOT INTENDED TO TAKE THE PLACE OF EXISTING MEDICAID FUNDING AND CONTRACTS WITH COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AGENCIES THAT ARE CURRENTLY UTILIZED FOR THE PROVISION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOL SETTINGS.

Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable with amendment report for SB 201.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy