



February 28, 2023

**House Judiciary Committee  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 44- Correctional Services- Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals-Substance Use Disorder Assessment and Treatment*

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 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 supports HB 44- Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals- Substance Use Disorder Assessment and Treatment.** This bill requires correctional facilities to perform a substance use disorder screening of pregnant inmates, and if appropriate to facilitate care with a behavioral health provider.

BHSB supports HB 44 because untreated substance use disorder in pregnancy can cause disastrous outcomes, including maternal death, poor fetal growth, preterm birth, or stillbirth. The danger presented by opioid use disorder for both child and mother require specialized medical care and treatment. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends pregnant women with opioid use disorders start medication assisted treatment with methadone or buprenorphine.<sup>1</sup> Adhering to a medication assisted treatment regimen while pregnant eliminates withdrawal’s negative impacts on the fetus and provides stability to the parent during their pregnancy.

HB 44 will provide immediate screening and treatment that will mitigate the risks to the incarcerated individual and their unborn child. It will ensure care between the community and the facility therefore reducing the potential for relapse, pregnancy complications, and overdose. As such, **BHSB urges the House Judiciary Committee to support HB 44.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/opioids/treatment.html>.