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## **Senate Finance Committee**

### **SB 888 – Health – Local Behavioral Health Authorities and Oversight of Behavioral Health Programs**

**Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 1:00 PM**

**Position: Support**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is Maryland’s state-designated Protection and Advocacy organization, empowered under state and federal law to protect individuals with disabilities from abuse, neglect and civil rights violations. DRM receives funding through the federal Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program and works with individuals with mental illness in institutions and in the community. As part of our advocacy, DRM works for access to effective treatment and community inclusion for individuals with mental illness.

Local behavioral health authorities (LBHAs) oversee many of the community behavioral health providers that our clients rely on for their behavioral health services. Adequate oversight and regulation of behavioral health providers is necessary to ensure that Marylanders always have access to high quality behavioral healthcare and are free from abuse, neglect, and rights violations in their healthcare. LBHAs provide that oversight, but they need the authority and the tools to effectively monitor behavioral health programs and respond to complaints. Disability Rights Maryland supports Senate Bill 888 because it would require LBHAs to track complaints against behavioral health programs and providers and forward complaint information about providers to the applicable regulatory board, helping to ensure that regulatory boards have the information they need to keep Marylanders safe from providers that may not meet their profession’s standards. It would also allow LBHAs to hire additional inspectors, helping to ensure that there is sufficient oversight of behavioral health providers. Disability Rights Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 888.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Em Holcomb, Staff Attorney at Disability Rights Maryland, at [emh@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:emh@disabilityrightsmd.org) or at 443-692-2536.