



March 21, 2025

## House Appropriations Committee

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

#### *SB0599 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Funding*

Mental Health Association of Frederick County is saving families, saving lives and makes our community whole. We offer crisis walk-in care and telephone assistance 24-hours a day, every day of the year. But we will not be able to continue to provide these crisis services without the funding support proposed in HB 1049.

**The Mental Health Association of Frederick County strongly supports SB0599 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program – Funding.** This bill would provide level funding to the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program for the next three years to maintain critical behavioral health care services.

The Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program was established in 2019 to build a more robust behavioral health crisis response system. These types of services provide immediate support when someone is experiencing serious emotional distress or crisis. Crisis services such as mobile crisis teams, urgent care clinics, and crisis residential beds are essential components of the behavioral health care continuum and provide an important alternative to calling 911 or going to the hospital Emergency Department.

The General Assembly mandated \$5 million for the last four years and the Behavioral Health Administration indicated that they plan to maintain it at this level for FY26. This stable funding has been used effectively to serve thousands of children and adults experiencing a crisis. It is also a smart investment that saves the state money in the long run by preventing higher hospital and criminal justice costs. Hospital EDs and the criminal justice system are not the appropriate setting to help resolve a crisis or help someone to stabilize. They are chaotic and not designed with mental health crises in mind. They are also expensive. The alternative interventions that are funded by this program must be maintained, especially considering the struggles the state continues to have with pediatric hospital overstay and lengthy ED wait times.

Our Crisis work supported 1,332 clients at our walk-in crisis center and over 57k phone calls were answered. Each of these represent a person in crisis who needs help.

Continuing funding for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program is a smart investment. **Mental Health Association of Frederick County urges the House Appropriations Committee to pass SB0599**

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