

House Bill 665
Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 6, 2025
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 665, which requires health insurers, nonprofit health service plans, health maintenance organizations, and Medicaid managed care organizations to provide coverage for annual behavioral health wellness visits, regardless of whether an assessment leads to a behavioral health diagnosis.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

According to the 2023 State of Mental Health in America report, 18% of adults in Maryland, equivalent to over 822,000 individuals, experienced a mental illness, while 15% of youth aged 12-17 reported suffering from at least one major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year.¹ As the second largest provider of behavioral health services in Maryland, we witness firsthand the growing need for behavioral health wellness visits. Specifically, at Villa Maria Behavioral Health, we offer mental health and substance use disorder treatment to individuals and families through our eight clinics and in-home respite services, in addition to maintaining over 100 public school partnerships. Our services extend to adults, children, and families across Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, Harford, Allegany, and Garrett Counties, catering to clients covered by Medicaid, including the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP), and Medicare.

Incorporating behavioral health services as a priority and increasing access to these services is essential for improving the overall health of Marylanders. This bill will significantly reduce barriers to care, particularly for low-income individuals and families, who often face the greatest challenges in accessing mental health services. Additionally, by addressing behavioral health concerns early, we can prevent more severe mental health and substance use issues from developing, ultimately reducing overall healthcare costs and improving productivity across Maryland's communities.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 665.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

1. Mental Health America. Prevalence Data 2023. Mental Health America. Published 2023. Accessed February 12, 2024.
<https://mhanational.org/issues/2023/mental-health-america-prevalence-data>