



TESTIMONY FOR SB0428 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Collaborative Care Model – Cost Sharing Prohibition – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Augustine

Committee: Senate Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0428 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots activist organizations representing well over 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to promote legislation in areas such as education, the environment, public safety, healthcare, and social justice that support all Marylanders and improve their lives. We put the power of the people to work in shaping legislation in Maryland.

SB0428 is essential for expanding access to integrated behavioral health care by prohibiting cost-sharing for services delivered under the Collaborative Care Model (CoCM). This evidence-based model embeds behavioral health support directly into primary care settings, improving early identification, treatment adherence, and long-term outcomes. For many Marylanders, especially those enrolled in Medicaid or covered by regulated carriers, even modest copays can deter them from seeking care. This bill removes that barrier and ensures that cost is never a reason someone goes without needed behavioral health support.

The threat of cost-sharing has long been a structural barrier that prevents individuals from accessing timely mental health care, exacerbating chronic conditions and increasing reliance on emergency services. SB0428 eliminates that barrier, strengthening Maryland’s behavioral health infrastructure and ensuring that patients receive coordinated, whole-person care.

When people can access behavioral health services without financial obstacles, communities become healthier and more stable. This bill encourages early

intervention, reduces avoidable hospitalizations, and supports better management of chronic conditions—particularly for individuals whose physical and behavioral health needs intersect.

This legislation also reflects a trauma-informed and equity-centered approach. Cost-sharing requirements disproportionately impact Low-income Marylanders, individuals with chronic illnesses, and marginalized communities. Removing these costs affirms Maryland’s commitment to fairness, dignity, and accessible care for all.

On a personal note, this bill resonates deeply with me. My husband has lived with advanced cardiac sarcoidosis since 2012, and heart-health monitoring has been a constant part of our lives every single week. I have seen firsthand how essential integrated behavioral health support is for patients managing complex, chronic conditions. Ensuring that Marylanders can access these services without cost barriers is not only sound policy—it is compassionate and life-changing.

SB0428 aligns directly with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It advances public health, supports social justice, and strengthens Maryland’s commitment to accessible, integrated care. By removing financial barriers to the Collaborative Care Model, this bill promotes healthier families and communities across the state.

I appreciate your consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0428.**

Jessica Gorski
Executive Committee
Maryland Legislative Coalition