



February 17, 2020

Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 230
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) urges the Economic Matters Committee to support HB 441 and HB 509 as they will help improve Baltimore City residents' ability to address persistently problematic alcohol outlets that threaten the health, safety and well-being of their communities.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) 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 nearly 75,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

These bills will help 1) remove loopholes encountered by neighborhood organizations that impede their ability to effectively protest the license renewal of problem alcohol outlets and 2) provide immediate protection for communities where violent acts have been committed in a licensed establishment.

Baltimore City has twice as many alcohol outlets as recommended under the state standard. The number and density of outlets and their sales, service and advertising practices can have a substantial effect on neighborhood health and safety. In Baltimore City in 2010, each additional alcohol outlet in a census tract was associated with a 2.2% greater count of violent crimes (i.e., homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault).¹

The study found that dense clusters of outlets in Greenmount East occurred in close proximity to greater counts of violent crime, 911 calls for service and drug arrests. In that area alone, there were 10,494 crimes in 2015.²

¹ Thornton, R, Greiner, A, & Jennings J. *Will Limiting the Number of Beer/Wine/Liquor Outlets in Baltimore City Create Healthier Residential Neighborhoods? Research Strongly Suggest that it Will.* The Abell Report. January 2013 (Volume 26). Retrieved from <https://www.abell.org/publications>

² Pamela Trangenstein, Raimee Eck, Cassandra Greisen, and David Jernigan. *Alcohol Outlets in Greenmount East, Midway/Coldstream, and Northwood Community Statistical Areas*, 2017

The proposed legislation will provide communities like Greenmount East with the tools needed to address problem outlets in their neighborhoods. **We respectfully urge you to vote for HB 441 and HB 509; these bills will help create a healthier and safer Baltimore.**



Adrienne Breidenstine
Vice President, Policy and Communications
Behavioral Health System Baltimore