



February 4, 2020

**Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 322**

Public Schools – Health Education – Gambling Dangers and Addiction

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.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore is pleased to support SB 322 Public Schools – Health Education – Gambling Dangers and Addiction

BHSB supports expanding public awareness on problem gambling to youth in public schools. Much of the problem gambling public awareness campaigns in Maryland have targeted a broad public audience with a focus on how to detect warning signs and get treatment. Similar education and awareness to youth in public schools is also important.

SB 322 requires the Department of Education to work with the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health to develop a program. BHA is an important expert to include in the development of any educational materials on problem gambling, as they oversee problem gambling prevention and treatment services for the state of Maryland. Including them in the planning will help to ensure there is consistency across health and education disciplines.

Over 150,000 adults in Maryland have a gambling problem. One way to prevent problem gambling is with early education. **As such, BHSB urges the Senate 322 Public Schools – Health Education – Gambling Dangers and Addiction.**