



February 18, 2020

**Senate Finance Committee**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

*SB 519 Public Health - Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities - Safety Plan*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is 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 disorder) 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 behavioral health service needs.

**BHSB supports SB 519 Public Health - Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities - Safety Plan with the sponsor's amendment to have "any behavioral health program that is required by its accreditation organization to create a community relations plan shall submit it to the state."**

[COMAR 10.63](#) outlines the licensing and accreditation requirements for community based behavioral health programs. All providers are required to be accredited from a national accreditation organization in order to be licensed in the State of Maryland. Certain accreditation organizations require behavioral health programs to have community relations plans in order to receive accreditation.

The amendment for SB 519 would align the bill with current national accreditation standards for community-based behavioral health programs and ensure that community relations plans are made available to the State. **As such, BHSB urges the Senate Finance Committee to support SB 519 with the sponsors amendment.**