

**Testimony in Support of SB0642, Home – and Community – Based Waiver
Services – Alterations and Task Force**

Senate Finance Committee

March 3, 2020

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMMD) is a voluntary, non-profit citizens' organization concerned with all aspects of behavioral health. MHAMMD's Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (the Coalition) is comprised of representatives from aging, mental health, consumer, family and professional associations and government agencies working together to improve the quality and accessibility of behavioral health assessment, treatment, recovery and illness prevention services for older Marylanders. This testimony represents support from both MHAMMD and the Coalition for SB0642 which would make a hugely positive impact for thousands of Marylanders.

Maryland's Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver represents hope to tens of thousands of Marylanders who need in-home help in order to prevent institutional placement. We frequently hear from older adults, individuals with disabilities, family caregivers and health and human service professionals about the distress and tragic quality of life and health consequences experienced by Marylanders who await the determination for eligibility and participation in the HCBS Waiver.

For too long, Maryland has capped the Waiver program while the number of individuals in need has rapidly grown. When individuals cannot get their health care needs met, several things happen that impact Maryland taxpayers:

- Workers leave the workforce to take care of loved ones
- Individuals use more acute care and institutions at higher cost than Waiver services
- Somatic and mental health problems exacerbate for lack of proper care and
- Individuals die from lack of proper and necessary care services.

HCBS Waiver expansion and improvements are a priority goal for many of our membership and we urge a favorable report on SB 642.