



March 3, 2021

**House Appropriations Committee**

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION**

*HB 589 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021*

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.

**Behavioral Health System Baltimore urges the General Assembly to oppose HB 589: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA)**, as this bill would significantly reduce funding for the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) to support innovative behavioral health services in Maryland.

**CHRC is a unique funding source as it allows for important behavioral health programs to be funded, and without the CHRC, many innovative public health programs would not be realized.** For example, in Fiscal Year 2016, BHSB was awarded a three-year grant of \$600,000 from the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) to support services at the Crisis Stabilization Center. The grant contributes to the operating budget for the project, supporting project management, case management, and peer support services. The citywide Crisis Stabilization Center will provide 24/7 sobering services to individuals who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Individuals taken to the Center can safely sober under medical supervision and then be linked to ongoing treatment and provided 30 days of case management to support their treatment goals. The Center is a new and innovative service within the state that promotes recovery and resiliency for individuals with substance use disorder, while also diverting people from the emergency department.

BHSB opposes the changes HB 589 makes to the funding formula for the CHRC, as it permanently reduces the Commission's operating budget. The CHRC has been a key partner in supporting the Crisis Stabilization Center, recognizing that sobering services integrated within the acute behavioral health care system represent a unique opportunity to expand behavioral health care services to individuals who have not been well served by the public behavioral health system. With this shared goal, BHSB was able to use the grant funding provided by the CHRC as leverage to obtain other public and private funding to support the Crisis Stabilization Center project.

Because the CHRC provides critical resources to communities to support innovative projects that expand access to behavioral health services, **BHSB urges the committee to reject the proposed funding formula changes for the CHRC in HB 589.**