



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0857**  
**HEALTH - MARYLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY CENTER OF**  
**EXCELLENCE – ESTABLISHMENT**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Hester

**Committee:** Finance

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0857 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The establishment of this Community Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence is an important addition that will establish policy for diverting adults with serious mental illness from the criminal justice system and get them into community mental health and addictions services. We have seen that the criminal justice system is no place for those with mental illness and it is past time that we develop policy for ensuring that the correct services are available for those people.

This Center of Excellence will be part of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victims Services. The Center of Excellence will be tasked with coming up with a multi-year strategic plan that includes –

- A statewide pre-crisis-to-recovery service delivery model and infrastructure
- A plan for formal and coordinated screening processes at jail booking; recommendations for investment in preventative services including –
  - Assertive community treatment
  - Expanded housing options for justice-involved persons
  - An increase in access to transportation
- Expansion of the use of technology across all intercepts of community health and public safety

Our members feel that we have a critical need for this type of strategy and policy. The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.

