

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 857

Hearing: Tuesday, March 11, 2021 at 1:00 pm

Presented by Claudia Barber, First Vice President of Anne Arundel County Branch of NAACP

Good afternoon Chair Delores Kelly and Vice Chair Brian Feldman.

My name is Claudia Barber, and I am the first vice president of the Anne Arundel County NAACP.

The Anne Arundel County NAACP wholeheartedly supports Senate Bill 857. The bill creates and establishes within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services, a Maryland Community Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence. We applaud this and ask that you **issue a favorable report on this bill.**

The Center is to provide technical assistance to local governments for the purposes of sharing best practices across jurisdictions, applying for grants to support work related behavioral health and justice and facilitating the distribution of resources, technical assistance and training in best practices related to programs along all intercepts of the community health and public safety system. The Anne Arundel County NAACP is behind this bill because it is all inclusive, and will assist the African American community greatly as a valuable resource to people of all colors. We understand its legislative intent is to divert adults with serious mental illness from a criminal justice system to community mental health and addiction services. For that, we say thank you. It is long overdue.

The bill also includes facilitating subsequent local and regional sequential intercept model summits to establish a regional approach to community health and public safety, which includes facilitating multi-jurisdictional applications for federal behavioral health and criminal justice grants.

We also applaud the bill's mention of recommendations for investment in preventive services systems, including assertive community treatment, expanded housing options for justice involved persons and an increase in access to transportation.

Finally, we strongly endorse the five priorities set forth in Section 13-4206 on the last page of the bill. They are (1) behavioral health crisis grants; (2) training for 911 operators; (3) peer support services; (4) behavioral health screenings; and (5) scholarships for students who attend a Maryland HBCU to study criminal justice related issues.

Please vote YES for Senate Bill 857. Thank you.