



NAACP

Anne Arundel County

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MSN*

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Testimony of the NAACP Anne Arundel County Branch

Claudia Barber, 1st Vice President

Health and Government Operations Committee

HB1280 Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence-Establishment

March 2, 2021 at 1:30 pm

Good afternoon Chairman Shane Pendergrass and Vice Chair Jocelyn Pena Melnyk. My name is Claudia Barber, and I am the first vice president of the Anne Arundel County NAACP and speaking on behalf of President Jacqueline Allsup.

The Anne Arundel County NAACP wholeheartedly supports House Bill 1280 and its companion bill 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. This bill is all inclusive and will assist the African American community greatly as a valuable resource to people of all colors because the 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 multijurisdictional 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 House Bill 1280. Thank you.

NAACP

Anne Arundel County Branch

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