

**Senate Bill 520**  
**Behavioral Health Services and Voluntary Placement Agreements –**  
**Children and Young Adults – Report Modifications**

House Health and Government Operations Committee  
March 23, 2021

**Support**

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 520, which modifies the requirements for reports on youth engagement with our behavioral health system.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth, individuals, and families each year, we recognize the importance of creating a strong system of care for children. We cannot create this system without the data to guide us.

Each day, Catholic Charities staff interact with Marylanders facing challenges and difficulties, those challenges and difficulties that have only escalated during the Pandemic. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems, including inequitable access to behavioral health services.

The system of care for children has been slowly dismantled over the last decade. There are fewer and fewer high intensity placements while at the same time, the promised community based supports have not materialize. This has left us with anecdotes about children who are not getting the care that they need. In 2018, the General Assembly passed legislation mandating the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services to provide data on youth seeking and obtaining behavioral health services. While informative, the resulting reports also pointed out some issues with the data requirements. SB 520 seeks to correct those issues so we can move forward with relevant and updated data. Specifically the bill adds data requirements for:

- Outpatient services
- Substance-related disorder program services
- The use of telehealth
- Grouping the information in racial and ethnic groups

This additional data will help us to plan and develop a system of care that is worthy of the children it serves. **On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for Senate Bill 520.**

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy