



STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
LT. GOVERNOR

Chair Pendergrass

Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk

Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 1280, establishing the Maryland Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence. As chair of the Commission to Study Mental and Behavioral Health in Maryland, I can attest to the hard work our subcommittees have done to study our behavioral health system and provide recommendations to better deliver service to the people of Maryland. I also know that centralizing and organizing information on our wide array of behavioral health programs in a Center of Excellence, with a particular focus on those programs intersecting with our justice system, will enable us to fully implement the recommendations of the commission and take advantage of the opportunities for improvement identified during our Sequential Intercept Model Summit at the end of last year.

The Maryland Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence will track program development, centralize resources, provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions, and help formalize local planning bodies to implement mental and behavioral health treatment best practices. As amended, the legislation would also establish a companion data center within the Maryland Statistical Analysis Center, to provide resources for the data driven analysis of existing state programs and conditions, and inform the work of the Center of Excellence.

At a time when criminal justice and behavioral health are at the forefront of the national conversation, the statewide implementation of comprehensive mental and behavioral health services to support our communities is essential. However, it requires that we are intentional in terms of planning and evaluating our programs, assisting our local jurisdictions, and coordinating efforts across agencies. The establishment of this Center of Excellence will support Marylanders across the State as we work to improve mental and behavioral health services and create a system that takes care of some of our most vulnerable community members.

I respectfully request a favorable report, with the sponsors submitted amendment, for House Bill 1280.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Boyd K. Rutherford'.

Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor of Maryland