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Senate Finance Committee February 23, 2022

Senate Bill 637 Support with Amendments

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) urges a favorable opinion on SB 637. MATOD represents over 65 healthcare organizations across Maryland that provide and promote high-quality, effective medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction. MATOD programs serve over 35,000 Marylanders enrolled in opioid treatment programs (OTPs) receiving methadone and buprenorphine, in conjunction with counseling and other medical services.

This piece of legislation includes a variety of reforms and enhancements designed to meet the increasing demand for high quality mental health and substance use care. It will increase comprehensive community-based treatment by expanding Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, improve health outcomes and treatment quality by increasing the use of measurement-based care in behavioral health and primary care settings, strengthen the behavioral health workforce by expanding resources for peers support networks and peer recovery specialists, improve care for children and youth by increasing the availability of home- and community-based wraparound services, and reduce reliance on law enforcement and emergency departments by ensuring stable reimbursement for crisis response services.

MATOD is especially interested in increasing resources for peer support services. Many OTPs employ peers to provide a variety of services to our clients. These services may take the form of helping someone arrange for transportation, fill out a job application, or find housing opportunities. Peers have become part of the treatment team and because of their lived experience, can develop a level of trust with clients that can often make a significant difference, especially when a client is at risk of relapsing.

As the demand for substance use and mental health treatment is at an all-time high, we need to make sure Maryland's public behavioral health system is able to meet people's needs in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The proposals in SB 637 will help move Maryland in that direction.

We urge a favorable report on SB 637.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.