



February 22, 2022

**Senate Finance Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 590- Public Health- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System- Requirements

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 77,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore is pleased to support SB 548- Public Health- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System-Requirements. This bill would require that beginning in 2023 and every 3 years after Maryland’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System includes the CDC’s module on Adverse Childhood Experiences in at one version of the survey. It also requires the Maryland Department of Health to publish this data within eight months of receiving it.

ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, are a category of early life traumas which negatively impact long-term health, prosperity, and social mobility outcomes. ACEs encompass traumatic experiences at all levels of severity and include emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, emotional and physical neglect, domestic and intimate partner violence, illicit substance use in the home, untreated mental illness in the home, the incarceration of a household member, and the separation and/or divorce of adult caregivers.¹

The Maryland Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an ongoing telephone-based chronic disease surveillance program designed to collect data on the behaviors and conditions that place Maryland adults at risk for chronic diseases, injuries, and preventable infectious diseases. 2018 BRFSS data reported that the prevalence of Maryland adults that experienced one to two ACEs was 38.2 percent while those experiencing three to eight was 23.0 percent. While in Baltimore City the prevalence of ACEs are much higher with 43 percent experiencing one to two ACEs and 33.4 percent experiencing three or more.² ACEs data not only helps us to understand the prevalence of traumatic childhood experiences but more specifically provide vital information that Maryland and local jurisdictions can use to identify policies and supportive services that can help mitigate the negative impact of ACEs and therefore create healthy communities where children and families thrive.

Currently, Maryland’s BRFSS is not required to include an ACEs module in the survey, which could hinder the state’s ability to effectively combat these ACEs. SB 590 ensures that Maryland’s BRFSS include the CDC’s ACEs module so that we have a complete picture of Marylanders exposure to adversity.

As such, BHSB urges the Senate Finance Committee to pass SB 590.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Findex.html

² Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) in Maryland: Data from the 2018 Maryland BRFSS: [2018 Maryland BRFSS - ACEs by County - 1-29-2020.pdf](#)