



## **Maryland Addiction Directors Council**

### **Senate Bill 637 Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion (Behavioral Health System Modernization Act)**

Finance Committee

February 23, 2022

#### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

Maryland Addictions Directors Council (MADC) represents outpatient and residential substance use disorder (SUD) and dual recovery treatment across Maryland. Our members provide over 1,000 residential treatment beds across the state. MADC providers are at the forefront of the Opioid Epidemic as well as managing the Covid pandemic during this same 2-year period. MADC strongly supports SB 637

The need for quality substance use and mental health treatment has never been higher.

- An estimated 2876 Marylanders died from overdose in the 12 months from April 2002 to April 2021, a rate that ranked 7<sup>th</sup> highest in the country during that period.
- Maryland hospitals saw more than 417,000 visits for behavioral health crisis in 2019.
- Suicides among Marylanders aged 18-25 increased by 80% from the first half of 2020-2021.

SB 637 can help. This bill includes a variety of reforms and enhancements designed to meet the increasing demand for high quality substance use and mental health 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.

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Behavioral healthcare has continued to experience serious workforce shortages. This workforce shortage started several years prior to the Covid pandemic but was exacerbated by Covid. Certified Peer Recovery Specialists have been a meaningful part of the behavioral healthcare workforce in substance use disorder treatment for several years, engaging clients in the recovery process and improving client outcomes in treatment. SB 637 provides the yearly funding for Maryland's community peer support network and requires Medicaid to reimburse for this much needed and effective workforce.

The demand for behavioral health care is at an all-time high. The enhancements in this bill are needed now more than ever. Maryland Addiction Directors Council urges this committee to pass SB 637

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony. Maryland Addictions Directors Council supports SB 637.

Sincerely,

*Craig Lippens*

Craig Lippens  
President, MADC