



**Maryland Addiction Directors Council**

**February 21, 2022**

**Written Testimony in Support of the  
Consumer Health Access Program (SB 460/HB 517)**

Maryland Addictions Directors Council (MADC) represents outpatient and residential SUD and dual recovery treatment across the State of Maryland. Our members provide over 1,000 residential treatment beds across Maryland and provide treatment on the front lines of the Opioid Epidemic.

MADC strongly supports the Consumer Health Access Program Bill (SB 460/ HB 517). MADC providers see first-hand the need for one source to guide consumers and crisis responders regarding plan coverage and access to services. When people are in crisis and open to SUD treatment, time is of the essence. Treatment delivered as rapidly as possible provides the best chance to engage those in need. The barriers to coverage including limited in-network benefits or administrative jostling and delays are obstacles to life saving treatment.

SAMHSA's *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States (2020)* details the enormous gap in SUD need versus treatment access. The study reports that 41.1 million people over age 12 needed SUD treatment in the study year however only 6.5% (2.6 million people) received any SUD treatment. Approximately 37.5 million people did not feel they needed treatment. Among those with an SUD who perceive a need for treatment, SAMHSA cites the top reason for not receiving SUD treatment as "having no health care coverage and not being able to afford the cost of treatment (19%).

In Maryland an estimated 2,876 people died from overdose, the 7<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation. In Baltimore City along since CY18 approximately 1,000 people each year have died of overdose, primarily from fentanyl overdose.

*(over)*



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A recent study entitled *Improving Access to Evidence-Based Medical Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder: Strategies to Address Key Barriers within the Treatment System* (Madras, Ahamad, Wen & Sharfstein, April 2020, p. 17) details the gaps in SUD need versus treatment and cites the failure of payers to meet the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (2008) in several ways including payors failing to provide timely access to in-network mental health and addiction treatment.

MADC strongly supports the Consumer Health Access Program Bill (SB 460/ HB 517) which will improve access to life-saving mental health and substance use disorder treatment by establishing a one-stop shop to:

- Operate a toll-free help line and online assistance portal to allow consumers, providers, and crisis responders to get help accessing mental health and substance use disorder treatment
- Assist consumers and providers in resolving issues related to health plan enrollment, service coverage, and access by working with health plans and regulators.
- Conduct in-person and other outreach and education to improve consumer knowledge of benefits coverage and access to treatment regardless of insurance
- Collect and analyze data to identify system-wide gaps in coverage and access as well as recommend improvements.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony. Maryland Addictions Directors Council strongly supports SB 460/HB 517.

Sincerely,

*Kim Wireman*

Kim Wireman  
Board Member, MADC