



# Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET  
AND MANAGEMENT

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BOYD K. RUTHERFORD  
*Lieutenant Governor*

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## **SENATE BILL 781 Public Safety and Behavioral Health Improvement Act (Hester)**

### **STATEMENT OF INFORMATION**

**DATE: March 8, 2022**

**COMMITTEE: Senate Finance and Senate Budget & Taxation**

**SUMMARY OF BILL:** SB 781, in part, mandates an annual appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 to support the Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence in the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS), the purpose of which is to gather information on behavioral health and support local governments in developing behavioral health care that limits interactions with the criminal justice system; mandates a FY 2024 appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 for the newly created Behavioral Health Screening Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) that would provide funds to local jurisdictions to expand behavioral health pilot programs; and mandates a FY 2024 appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 for the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to develop and enhance training on behavioral health conditions and crisis intervention that would limit interactions that individuals with behavioral health conditions have with law enforcement.

**EXPLANATION:** The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy proposal being advanced by the legislation, but rather on the aggregate \$1.5 million mandated appropriations that impact the FY 2024 and \$500,000 mandated appropriation that impacts subsequent budgets. DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

The FY 2023 Budget allocates: \$5 million for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program; \$4.8 million for mobile crisis teams that provide 24/7 availability of intervention services to the location of a person in crisis; and \$3.4 million in federal funds for Home and Community Based Services in Behavioral Health Medicaid under the Children's Health Insurance Program.

The Capital Improvement Program provides for the construction of four 24-hour regional behavioral health crisis centers throughout the State (FY 2023 - FY 2026). The FY 23 Capital Budget includes funding to begin a prototypical design for these crisis centers.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

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