



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

**HB 935 Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion
(Behavioral Health System Modernization Act)**

Hearing Date: March 9, 2022, 1:30pm

Committee: Finance

Position: SUPPORT

Chairperson McIntosh, Vice-chair Chang, and members of the Appropriations Committee: The Maryland Public Health Association would like to express support for House Bill 935- Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion (Behavioral Health System Modernization Act), sponsored by Delegate Bagnall. The need for quality mental health and substance use care has never been higher. In February 2021, nearly 40% of Marylanders reported symptoms of anxiety or depression and the rates are increasing from COVID-19, the opioid crisis, and the rise in youth-related mental health problems, yet nearly a third of those individuals were unable to get needed counseling or therapyⁱ. Maryland hospitals saw more than 417,000 visits for behavioral health crises in 2019ⁱⁱ. Maryland has 48 federally designated mental health professional shortage areasⁱⁱⁱ including 16 entire counties^{iv}.

HB 935 can help. The bill includes a variety of reforms and enhancements designed to meet the increasing demand for high quality mental health and substance use care. HB 935 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.

Expanding behavioral health resources that minimize the use of emergency rooms and the law enforcement will ensure Marylanders get appropriate and prompt care at the time they need it most. The demand for behavioral health care is at an all-time high. The enhancements in this bill are needed now more than ever. MdPHA urges a favorable report on HB 935.

Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

ⁱ <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/MarylandStateFactSheet.pdf#8>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.fundmd988.org/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Resources & Services Administration, <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>

^{iv} Rural Health Information Hub, <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/charts/7?state=MD>