



BALTIMORE CITY

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Toni Maynard-Carter
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Broadway Center

Vickie Walters
Immediate Past President
IBR REACH Health
Services

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Senate Bill 549/House Bill 715 Support

The Baltimore City Substance Abuse Director (BSCAD) is an advocacy and provider organization comprised of Baltimore City substance use disorders treatment providers representing all levels of care from prevention to residential treatment. Our mission is the promotion of high-quality, best-practice and effective substance use disorders treatment for the citizens of Baltimore City. We are also involved in and support legislation that ensures our citizens get the best possible care through active consideration of legislation as it relates to the health and well-being of our consumer population.

As such, BCSAD strongly supports SB549/HB715.

Since December of 2019 providers have been faced with multiple issues with functionality and transparency with Optum and the Incedo System. Often the problems with in the system were brought to Optum's attention by the providers themselves. Fixes often created other problems and information on how to deal with these was not forthcoming from Optum. Providers have spent a good portion of the last two years discussing these amongst ourselves, asking Optum for clarity and resolutions, only to receive partial responses and a lack of detail required for providers to confidently understand process and movement toward resolution.

Provider representatives have been fully engaged and they have brought information back to specific groups including the BCSAD. Some issues have been resolved, but many have not, and there are no statutory protections for providers for those concerns that linger.

Providers need these protections and Optum needs to be held responsible for the product that they are supposed to be providing the Maryland Behavioral Health Community. Providers need the guardrails that SB549/HB715 outline in order to continue to provide high quality behavioral health services for the citizens of Maryland.

The cost of the failed ASO, a sloppy transition during the height of a global pandemic, a lack of response and transparency have been great for providers. Protections need to be afforded to the provider community to ensure that the ASO is: acting responsibly, communicating effectively their intentions, providing ALL the data providers need to reconcile in a usable format, and providing an avenue to address disagreements that is through a third party.

It is also doubly important to emphasize the need for forgiveness of money owed. Not only were providers forced through the COVID-19 pandemic to spend additional money to serve the mental health and substance abuse needs of our communities in a completely different modality (telehealth) - but we were also forced to do so with an ASO that was not working and unreliable.

Protection for providers in this process is essential and we therefor ask for a favorable reading of this bill. But for this to be made right, forgiveness of the burden providers have had to carry these last two years must also be considered.

c/o REACH Health Services
2104 Maryland Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
(410) 752-6080