



Testimony on SB 555
Fair Wage Act of 2023
House Economic Matters Committee
March 30, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT AS AMENDED

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) is the leading voice for community-based providers serving the mental health and addiction needs of vulnerable Marylanders. Our 110 members serve the majority of those accessing care through the public behavioral health system. CBH members provide outpatient and residential treatment for mental health and addiction-related disorders, day programs, case management, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), employment supports, and crisis intervention.

We thank Governor Moore for accelerating in his budget the last two years of mandated rate increases- as included in the Fight for Fifteen legislation passed in 2019 - for behavioral health providers so that we can in turn meet the accelerated timeline for implementation of the \$15 minimum wage as of Jan. 1, 2024 (as amended by the Senate). Our workforce challenges predated the pandemic but have gotten progressively worse over the past two years. Given the demanding nature of the work we do, we must pay significantly more than minimum wage if we are to compete in the marketplace for a qualified workforce. Our rates are set by the state Medicaid department, and we cannot pass our costs on to the individuals we serve.

SB 555 was amended by the Senate to remove the language indexing the minimum wage to inflation. **We ask that if the Economic Matters Committee decides to restore minimum wage indexing, that it also amend the bill to include rate indexing for community behavioral health providers commensurate with that applied to minimum wage.**

Thank you for your consideration.

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