

Senate Bill 362 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics – Established

Senate Finance Committee

February 14, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 362.

SB 362 will increase access to comprehensive community based mental health and substance use care by expanding Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCS).

CCBHCS are federally designated, proven models that provide a comprehensive range of outpatient mental health and substance use treatment, care coordination with other providers and services, and connection to other systems and supports. They are based on the federally qualified health center (FQHC) model, providing services regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

CCBHCS must provide nine core services, including services for children and youth, 24/7 crisis intervention, peer supports, substance use treatment, and primary health screening and monitoring. States that have implemented the model broadly have seen increased access to care, reductions in emergency department and inpatient utilization, a mitigation of behavioral health workforce challenges, higher engagement post discharge from hospitals, improved utilization of medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorders, and improved integration with physical care.

Maryland currently has very limited CCBHC coverage, with a few programs funded by federal grants they applied for directly. These programs, however, are seeing similarly positive results. For example, Sheppard Pratt's CCBHC program has reduced hospital stays by nearly 50% and reduced the average per client emergency room visit cost by 80%. The Cornerstone Montgomery CCBHC program has decreased hospitalizations between 28% and 36% in each of the past three years, and emergency department visits were down 20% in 2019, 30% in 2020, and 59% in 2021. Unfortunately, grant funding for these programs is time limited. The establishment of a state CCBHC program pursuant to SB 362 is necessary to maintain this momentum and build upon this success.

This bill will improve behavioral health outcomes, save money, and keep people out of crisis. **For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 362 and urges a favorable report.**

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