

January 30, 2023

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of SB 101- Collaborative Care Model**

From: Shepherd's Table

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Shepherd's Table is a social services organization that provides hot, nutritious meals, a free eye clinic, clothing, and other social services primarily to the unhoused community in Montgomery County, District 20. Many of our clients have experienced the trauma of unstable housing or food insecurity, and rarely have access to the necessary behavioral health care that could assist them through such a difficult stage of life. Overcoming homelessness and hunger becomes even more difficult when it is exacerbated by behavioral health challenges, just as it is with physical health challenges. **Shepherd's Table submits this testimony in support of SB 101 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Collaborative Care Model Services – Implementation and Reimbursement Expansion.**

SB 101 will improve the quality of behavioral health care delivered in primary care settings for Maryland Medicaid recipients by expanding their access to the proven Collaborative Care Model (CoCM).

CoCM is a validated, patient-centered, evidence-based approach for integrating physical and behavioral health care in primary care settings, where most people with mild to moderate behavioral health conditions seek care first. The model uses a team-based approach to deliver (1) care coordination and management; (2) regular, systematic monitoring and treatment using a validated clinical rating scale; and (3) regular, systematic behavioral health caseload reviews and consultation for patients. CoCM has been validated in over 80 randomized controlled trials and shown to improve health outcomes and save money, mainly via a reduction in unnecessary hospitalization and higher intensity levels of care.

Commercial health insurers in Maryland and Medicare are already reimbursing providers for delivering this model. An ongoing CoCM pilot in the Maryland Medicaid program has demonstrated “clinically significant improvement” in depression and anxiety symptoms for more than 65 percent of participants. It is time to end the pilot and join the 20+ other states providing CoCM broadly to their Medicaid recipients.

Receiving quality behavioral healthcare could make it easier for individuals to get out of homelessness and even help prevent it. Ensuring that Medicaid recipients have access to the same healthcare that commercial patients do is essential for health equity. Behavioral healthcare IS healthcare, and everyone deserves quality care. This bill will improve behavioral health outcomes, save money, and keep people out of a crisis that could become detrimental to

their housing situation. **For these reasons, Shepherd's Table urges this committee to pass SB 101.**