



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Senate Finance Committee

Chair: Senator Melony Griffith

March 7th, 2023

Senate Bill 582: Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 582, Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland).

MRHA believes that all Marylanders deserve access to behavioral health care. According to the Mental Health Association of Maryland in a 2022 report, sixteen entire counties are federally designated as mental health professional shortage areas.¹ With this shortage in mind, hundreds of thousands of Marylanders experience behavioral health crises.¹ Currently, the state cannot meet this demand.

SB 582 can help address this important issue. Establishing certified community behavioral health clinics will greatly improve access to care because individuals will not be turned away from services based on their ability to pay.² This is an imperative barrier to address, as the 2022 Access to Care Survey completed by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing reported that cost-related issues prevented 37% from getting mental health care and 31% from receiving substance use care.

MRHA urges you to support SB 582 to ensure all Marylanders have access to the health care they need.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE, Executive Director

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1. 2022 Session Summary. Mental Health Association of Maryland. <https://www.mhamd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/MHAMD-2022-Final-Session-Summary.pdf>. Published 2022. Accessed 2023.
2. Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (ccbhcs). SAMHSA. <https://www.samhsa.gov/certified-community-behavioral-health-clinics>. Accessed March 5, 2023.
3. More than 4 in 10 U.S. adults who needed substance use and mental health care did not get treatment. National Council for Mental Wellbeing. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/news/more-than-4-in-10-us-adults-who-needed-substance-use-and-mental-health-care-did-not-get-treatment/>. Published May 31, 2022. Accessed March 5, 2023.