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Senate Bill 581 – Behavioral Health Care Coordination Value-Based Purchasing Pilot Program

Position: Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of Senate Bill 581. This bill would establish the Behavioral Health Value-Based Purchasing Pilot Program in the Maryland Department of Health to establish and implement an intensive care coordination model using value-based purchasing in the specialty behavioral health system.

This is one of several bills that aims to take a holistic approach to analyze and make recommendations for how the State can best provide appropriate, accessible, and comprehensive behavioral health services to all Marylanders. CareFirst applauds the General Assembly for taking this approach as it complements our own efforts to enhance access to behavioral health and improve health outcomes. For example, we are partnering with [7 Cups](#), a digital resource for members to get emotional support 24/7. We are also collaborating with [Headway](#), a tech-enabled solution that shows up-to-date provider appointment availability and enables real-time data sharing to gain further insights into member experience.

CareFirst strongly supports value-based care arrangements as a vehicle to incentivize providers to provide high-quality care in an efficient manner. This pilot program will drive better health outcomes and improve patient experience as part of a welcome step towards broader delivery system transformation to better serve those with behavioral health needs. We look forward to reviewing the results of this pilot to more deeply understand how we can collectively better serve all Marylanders.

Behavioral health is essential to advancing whole-person care and improving health outcomes. Barriers to accessing behavioral health persist, including a fragmented system of care, stigma, and an insufficient supply of mental health providers. However, demand continues to rise, which has increased the need for innovative approaches, such as those included in this bill. CareFirst strongly supports Senate Bill 581 and looks forward to partnering with legislators, health departments, public health groups, and other stakeholders to ensure our communities have access to necessary mental health and substance use disorder services.

We urge a favorable report.

About CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

As the largest healthcare insurer in the Mid-Atlantic region, CareFirst provides health insurance products and administrative services to 3.6 million individuals and employers in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. We participate in the individual, small group and large employer markets, as well as in Medicare and Medicaid. CareFirst is Maryland's only nonprofit health service plan and consistent with our not-for-profit mission, we are committed to improving the overall health of the communities we serve, and increasing the accessibility, affordability, safety, and quality of healthcare throughout our service area.

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