

My name is Council Member Jocelyn Route and I reside in the 4200 Block of 55th Ave in Bladensburg, MD which is in District 47. I am writing to you today to let you know that I am in full support of SB0108 which is a very important piece of legislation for all Marylanders

I wear multiple hats. I am an individual with lived experience in the behavioral health system of care, I also serve as a mental health advocate promoting wellness and recovery as a social worker. I graduated with my Master of Social Work from Howard University in the Spring of 2009. I have worked in the field of behavioral health for over 15 years. I now serve as a Public Health Advisor for the US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration where my role is to oversee the Mental Health Awareness training grant portfolio as a Government Project Officer for the Center for Mental Health Services. I also come to you with a parent lens. I am a mother of 5 children, two of the children I serve as their treatment foster care parent as they are children in need of assistance in the Maryland Child Welfare system and 3 of my 5 children have mental health diagnosis and are in active treatment. Why does all of this background matter you may ask.

Well, my experience as a mental health professional, advocate, and a person with lived experience is presented to you today strongly requesting that each of you be a champion for this bill because individuals like me and my children need access wellness opportunities in the recovery continuum. Actually, all insured Marylanders experiences some sort of mental health issue or concern in our life but because of recovery oriented wellness activities, treatment and sometimes medication, recovery is possible. Recovery has been identified as a primary goal for behavioral health care. In August 2010, leaders in the behavioral health field, consisting of people in recovery from mental health and substance use problems and SAMHSA, met to explore the development of a common, unified working definition of Recovery. SAMHSA has a definition of Recovery that I would like to share with you.

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Often times people need wellness activities to boost their ability to continue on the many different tools that are used to assist individuals live full lives. Recovery pathways are highly personalized and often time wellness activities can benefit the individual needs and goals of an individual who may be enrolled in professional clinical treatment but given the high demands of the behavioral health workforce and staffing shortages a session in a yoga studio to promote deep breathing and meditation may be the exact thing that saves someone's life.

You see wellness activities should be included in health insurance plans because often times wellness activities are very expensive and for those individuals who can not afford wellness opportunities unfortunately they are left behind and often times suffer in silence until they can access treatment.

Wellness activities should be covered by insurance plans because it just makes since. Wellness activities in conjunction with the use of medications; support from professionals such as therapist and families peer support can improve the recovery continuum for so many Marylanders. Recovery is non-linear, characterized by continual growth and improved functioning that may involve setbacks. Because setbacks are a natural, though not inevitable, part of the recovery process, it is essential to foster resilience for all individuals and families through accessible wellness activities that are readily available to people like me and my children who may need an array of treatment options to assist our mental health diagnosis.

We wouldn't tell a heart patient that their insurance will only cover medication and a visit to their cardiologist to treat their heart condition. Insurance companies often provide other means of treating a

physical health symptom. I hope my testimony today will solidify your support and you will help SB0108 get passed quickly.

Best,

Jocelyn Route