



Senate Bill 255
Public Health – Home and Community Based Services for Children and Youth
Finance Committee
February 14, 2022
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports SB 255 which would increase the availability of behavioral health wraparound services for Maryland's children.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors. We recognize the importance of meeting the behavioral health needs of youth in the community before a residential placement or hospitalization is needed.

High-fidelity wraparound is the gold standard for treating youth with behavioral health needs as it coordinates an array of community-based services to the family and child that greatly enhance the chances of a child NOT needing to be placed out of the home. Our children's behavioral health system currently has two programs that provide wrap around services, Targeted Case Management (TCM) and the 1915(i). Despite efforts to create strong programs a decade ago, adjustments to the programs in recent years have left them fledgling. The stringent eligibility criteria result in children being accepted into the programs after the point where they would be effective. By the time their child qualifies, the families are often in crisis. This has led to under enrollment in some cases.

Furthermore, the programs are unable to deliver key evidence-based practices because the rates discourage provider participation. To sustain an evidence-based practice, there are additional training costs particularly for new staff. The current rates do not account for those costs. Moreover, providers offering the same services under a DJS or DHS contract are reimbursed at a much higher rate. This has led to a reduction of providers participating in TCM and the 1915(i) even though they are already offering the services in the state.

If we truly want to create a system of care for Maryland's children and youth that responds to their behavioral health needs in the community and avoids costly out of home placements, we must invest in high intensity community-based services like TCM and the 1915(i).

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 255.

Submitted By: Kevin Keegan, Division Director, Family Service