



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

SB 582 – Behavioral Health Care – Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)

DATE: March 7, 2023
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
POSITION: Favorable with Amendments
FROM: The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to pass SB 582 – Behavioral Health Care – Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland) with amendments to include infant and early childhood behavioral health experts and to include a workgroup on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.


SB 582 creates a Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access. This Commission will make recommendations to ensure that all Marylanders who need them can receive accessible and comprehensive behavioral health services. The Commission’s work will include assessing needs and gaps in behavioral health services across the state, conducting a needs assessment of the behavioral health workforce, and making recommendations to ensure that Maryland is aligned with best practices from other states.

My experience as a teacher in Frederick County Public Schools has shown me the importance of mental health services for our youngest residents. Increasingly, research shows how brain development is highly influenced by a young child’s experiences. In fact, we now know that 85% of brain development happens before a child turns 3 years old.¹

As the Frederick County Executive, I am working closely with experts in our community to address the mental and behavioral health crisis our youth is currently suffering. Our resource in our county is the Frederick County Infants and Toddlers Program (FCITP), which is an Early Intervention Program that helps families and caregivers meet the educational, social emotional, and physical needs of young children (from birth to age 3) with developmental delays and disabilities. The work FCITP and other community programs do is critically important for the well-being of our families. To better support this work, I believe that the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access should include infant and early childhood behavioral health in its scope.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 582. As the Frederick County Executive, I respectfully request a FAVORABLE report on SB 582 with amendments.

Respectfully,



Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive
Frederick County, MD

¹ [Early Brain Development and Health | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/earlychildhood/early-brain-development-and-health/)