

March 14, 2023

Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

HB 1155- Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 78,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports 1155 Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model. This bill establishes a Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model staffed by the Behavioral Health Administration.

Across the United States, one in six children are diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.¹ Young people routinely have difficulty finding mental health support and services that respond to their needs. As a result, many do not receive appropriate care until their mental health challenges become more severe, difficult and costly to treat. In 2022, approximately 45% of Maryland youth aged 12-17 who reported symptoms of depression over the last year did not receive any mental health care.²

BHBS supports HB 1155 because early intervention programs that are integrated and co-designed with youth can provide accessible, comprehensive, user-centered mental health care. The co-design model is rooted in two beliefs: everyone should have the right to participate in the decisions that impact their life, and everyone has valuable knowledge to contribute to a service-delivery design process³. The most prominent example of the youth-codesigned model in the United States is Allcove, a pilot program launched in California in 2021. There are currently no active co-designed integrated mental health programs in Maryland. However, interest is growing and a 2022 Joint Chairmen’s Report on youth-centered behavioral health programs from the Maryland Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services made a recommendation to create a workgroup to further explore the creation of a pilot program in Maryland.

Community-based prevention and early intervention programs that are co-designed with youth offer more relevant and appropriate services because the process brings together people with varied life experiences, cultures and beliefs, educational background and expertise. Therefore, this innovative

¹ Cree RA, Bitsko RH, Robinson LR, Holbrook JR, Danielson ML, Smith DS, Kaminski JW, Kenney MK, Peacock G. Health care, family, and community factors associated with mental, behavioral, and developmental disorders and poverty among children aged 2–8 years — United States, 2016. *MMWR*, 2018;67(5):1377-1383.

² The State of Mental Health in America 2022, Mental Health America, <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2022%20State%20of%20Mental%20Health%20in%20America.pdf>

³ *Co-designing with Young People*. Orygen. <https://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/Service-knowledge-and-development/Guidelines/Co-designing-with-young-people-The-fundamentals>

approach to services for youth behavioral health eliminate many of the barriers that discourage and prevent youth from accessing care they need. As such, **BHSB urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to support HB 1155.**

For more information, please contact BHSB Director, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Stacey Jefferson at 443-813-9231 or stacey.jefferson@bhsbaltimore.org