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**Testimony on HB 1148**  
**Behavioral Health Care – Treatment and Access**  
**(Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)**  
**Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics**  
House Health & Government Operations Committee  
February 28, 2023  
**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Lower Shore Clinic is writing in support of HB 1148. Lower Shore Clinic is a safety net provider for persons with severe mental illness, currently serving Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties. The Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) has identified access to behavioral care Maryland's number one issue and referenced one of the solutions to pursue is the Behavioral Health Integration in the Maryland Primary Care Program (MDPCP).

Lower Shore Clinic strongly believes that the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model of wraparound services is the most direct way to help persons with mental illness. The gaps in healthcare for persons suffering from a severe and persistent mental illness are significant which lead to our organization providing a wholly integrated model of care with primary care and outpatient behavioral health intertwined with housing, transportation, healthy food, substance use treatment, population health management, employment and vocational services, financial management, day programs for loneliness interventions, crisis stabilization, and flexible funding to remove barriers to care.

Nationally, a mental health crisis has been the focus of the Biden administration, noting as part of the Unity Agenda, that two of five adults report symptoms of anxiety or depression. Black and brown communities are disproportionately undertreated. According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 43% of US adults who say the needed substance use or mental health care in the past 12 months did not receive that care- citing numerous barriers to access. CCBHC requirements seek to improve service availability for all communities, focusing specifically on providing services that are appropriate to the population of the catchment area of a CCBHC. Culturally competent care is even harder to find for those adults seeking care. 61% of US adults feel there are not enough mental health care providers who are trained to address issues specific to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. CCBHC requirements seek to provide culturally competent, trauma informed, evidence-based care to all members of a community.

Lower Shore Clinic, Inc was awarded a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Planning, Development, and Implementation grant by SAMHSA on 9/30/2022. The CCBHC model as put forth by SAMHSA offers a full array of services to individuals across the lifespan. These services are meant to improve stability within the community by providing whole person care to individuals with behavioral health issues. These required services include crisis planning, prevention, and response; outpatient and community based mental health, substance use, and primary care; peer, family support and counselor services; case management and psychiatric rehabilitation services.

CCBHC and SAMHSA funding support using evidence-based practices to directly impact healthcare targets. As our work is just beginning in the four-year granting period, we've already been able to see benefits by adding much needed programs to our service line. With grant funding, Lower Shore Clinic has been able to initiate the process of starting a new Assertive Community Treatment team to serve our most critically ill patients- those with severe mental illness, comorbid substance use disorders, homelessness, and complicated medical conditions. Assertive Community Treatment is a multidisciplinary evidence-based team approach that has proven outcomes of reducing hospitalizations, increasing housing stability, and improving quality of life for people with the most severe symptoms of mental illness, according to Case Western Reserve University. This program will be able to serve 100 individuals at any given time in the Lower Eastern Shore Region of Maryland. Payment rates that allow for coverage for high quality services is a basic step in ensuring delivery of evidence-based practices.

In order to fully meet the needs of a community, all persons must be offered timely, accessible healthcare. CCBHC requirements support offering services across the lifespan in as little as 1 business day in order to serve someone who is currently experiencing a mental health crisis. As the Unity Agenda points out, the COVID pandemic has caused disruptions in routines and relationships, has led to increased social isolation, anxiety, and learning loss. According to the 2020 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic report to Congress, the average wait time for an initial appointment is 50 days. However, across CCBHC programs about 70 percent of new CCBHC clients receive an initial evaluation with ten days of their first contact, a vast improvement in service availability.

In many communities, there is a significant lack of affordable transportation, housing, and other services related directly to social determinants of health. According to the American Hospital Association, socioeconomic factors are responsible for about 40 percent of a patient's health. The Healthy People 2030 initiative purports that social determinants of health (SDOH) have a major impact on people's health, well-being and quality of life. These SDOH include safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods; racism, discrimination and violence; education job opportunities, and income; access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities, among others.

Currently, the most common healthcare billing method, fee for service billing, does not support the costs related to service persons with these additional needs. The funding streams available to established CCBHC allow agencies to fully support the social determinants of health that drive many healthcare costs. Currently, as a mission driven project of our agency, we offer housing, money management services, medication management services, and transportation to those members who are enrolled in our system of care. These services would be vastly improved and more available throughout the state with the flexible funding streams related to CCBHC daily bundled payment methodology.

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing has found that CCBHC service delivery has increased access to mental health and substance use care. In New York, CCBHC providers reported a 54 percent decrease in the number of clients using inpatient behavioral healthcare, which translated to a 27% decrease in associated monthly costs. In Missouri, CCBHC clinics reported 76% reduced emergency department visits and hospitalizations. Lower Shore Clinic strongly encourages that the House approve HB1148 in order to move forward with improving the delivery of healthcare to all Marylanders.