



February 23, 2023

Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **HB 1148 – Behavioral Health Care – Treatment and Access**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Delegate Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

As a clinical psychologist living and working in Towson, Maryland, I ask that the Health and Government Operations Committee favorably report on House Bill 1148.

This bill takes an important step toward expanding access to behavioral health care services to Maryland residents most in need. As a therapist working in private practice, I can attest that the demand for behavioral health services far exceeds the supply of those services available. I routinely struggle to find referrals for patients in need, at all levels of care (e.g., outpatient, intensive outpatient day programs, inpatient). A review of this disparity is much needed, and that is what this bill aims to address. Furthermore, this bill pays specific attention to vulnerable, marginalized, and underrepresented populations, which are often where behavioral health care needs are greatest. Finally, I am pleased to see the inclusion of a provision to make recommendations on action plans in order to be prepared to address the mental health needs in the aftermath of extreme weather events. Behavioral health providers are not currently equipped to address the inevitable surge in behavioral health needs in the event of a weather-related disaster, such as extreme levels of precipitation, wind, flooding, drought, or wildfire. Including this provision in HB 1148 is a crucial step in making sure health providers and first responders are prepared to address behavioral health needs during these crucial moments.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments on HB 1148. If I can be of any further assistance as your committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact me at drjongorman@towsontherapygroup.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Gorman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jon" and last name "Gorman" clearly legible.

Jon Gorman, Psy.D.