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HB 1148

Behavioral Healthcare - Treatment & Access (Behavioral Health Model for Marylanders)

Primary Provisions of HB 1148:

- Establishes a Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access, consisting of various members with expertise in the behavioral and mental health care environment.
 - The Commission will be tasked with examining the current landscape of behavioral health treatment in the state and make annual recommendations to the General Assembly to improve access to treatment and enhance patient outcomes.
- Establishes a Value-Based Purchasing Pilot Program that aims to explore ways to improve patient outcomes through financial incentives offered to providers.
- Requires the Maryland Department of Health to submit a state plan amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to establish Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) to provide coverage for mental health and substance use treatment services at these facilities.
- Extends the sunset date in the definition of telehealth to maintain the coverage of audio-only telephone conversations as a means of remote treatment to 2025.

Why HB 1148 is Needed:

- With nearly 780,000 people experiencing mental health concerns in 2021, Maryland has the sixth-highest prevalence of adult mental illness and the fourth-highest prevalence among children.¹
- The lack of crisis treatment access often leads to individuals seeking care in hospital emergency departments.
 - In Maryland, 70% of emergency room (ER) boarding days were a result of mental health issues, but only a quarter were admitted, resulting in the state having the longest ER wait times in the nation.²

¹ [Mental Health America and NAMI \(National Alliance on Mental Illness\)](#) (2021)

² [The Baltimore Banner](#) (2022)

- Lack of access to children’s psychiatric crisis care forces youth to spend lengthy periods in inadequate juvenile detention facilities and ER departments while they wait for a bed to open up at an inpatient treatment facility.
- By significantly reducing the need for hospitalization nationwide, CCBHCs have an enormous impact. In Maryland, they have successfully prevented 93% of patients from returning to residential care.³ Additionally, these programs can alleviate the backlog of Maryland residents waiting for admission to inpatient facilities.

What HB 1148 Accomplishes:

- HB 1148 embodies the General Assembly’s intent to make significant structural investments in mental health treatment and access.
- The Commission will provide the General Assembly with targeted recommendations informed by various stakeholders with unique expertise in this field.
- Utilizing existing provider and insurance networks, HB 1148 will identify new pathways to better patient outcomes that use strategic financial incentives that also support the provider community.
- HB 1148 will extend the permitted use of telehealth services to ensure that access to treatment isn’t predicated on an individual’s location or socioeconomic status.
- HB 1148 will provide comprehensive treatment access points at the community level where Marylanders can receive the care they need to enhance their quality of life and reduce visits to hospital emergency departments.

³ [The Washington Post](#) (2023)