



**House Bill 1148 Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access
(Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)**

Health and Government Operations Committee

February 28, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Totally Linking Care MD (TLC-MD) is a nonprofit coalition of 6 hospitals that connects healthcare providers and programs with residents in Southern Maryland (Calvert County, Charles County, Prince George’s County, and St. Mary’s County). We believe that everyone deserves access to quality healthcare.

We build innovative health programs through grant funding and sustain them through public/private partnerships. Our goal is to simplify how residents access healthcare, one program at a time, to help them become the healthiest version of themselves. We do this by breaking down barriers to health care services and building bridges between hospitals, healthcare professionals, faith-based organizations, and, most importantly, the residents of our community.

HB 1148 establishes a commission “to make recommendations to provide appropriate, accessible, and comprehensive behavioral health services to individuals in the state across the behavioral health continuum that are available on demand.” The bill enumerates commission membership, establishes standing workgroups, and outlines various duties and responsibilities across a variety of policy areas. The commission sunsets after four years.

Behavioral health stakeholders in Maryland have worked long and hard to address an increasing demand for mental health and substance use care across the state. After many years, we are finally starting to see attention to and progress across three key pillars of the behavioral health care continuum – community-based services and supports, crisis response services, and inpatient treatment.

As reforms in these areas progress, this commission can play an important role in ensuring these efforts are integrated, coordinated, and properly resourced. As such, we would urge the commission to develop a plan within one year that guides state coordination and support for these ongoing reform efforts. The commission should then focus the remaining three years of its term on oversight and execution of the plan, including allocation of resources necessary to ensure its success.

As TLC-MD supports Prince George’s County, Maryland with the implementation of their crisis continuum system, it is vital that we support House Bill 1148 Behavioral Health Care -



Treatment and Access. The new crisis system is consistent with the gold standard criteria of crisis services based on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) guidelines.

Maryland continues to work towards better behavioral health care systems. True “No wrong door” facilities will need the support of this Bill. As we support this Bill, it is also important to recognize that we would like action towards these initiatives in addition to studies being performed. With the need of these services so high, it is important to address the need in tandem.

For these reasons, Totally Linking Care Maryland (TLC-MD) urges this committee to pass HB 1148.

Sincerely,

Margaret Fowler

**Margaret Fowler
Executive Director**