



February 28, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 1148 – Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland) - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Health Care Commission (the “MHCC”) is submitting this letter of support on *HB 1148 – Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)*.

This bill establishes the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access (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 also establishes within the Maryland Department of Health the Behavioral Health Care Coordination Value-Based Purchasing Pilot Program an intensive care coordination model using value-based purchasing in the specialty behavioral health system. The Maryland Department of Health is also required to submit a state plan amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to establish certified community behavioral health clinics. HB 1148 extends the date of the inclusion of audio-only telephone conversations in the definition of “telehealth” in the Maryland Medicaid Program and certain requirements related to the provision of reimbursement for health care services appropriately provided through telehealth by Medicaid, commercial insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations.

An inadequate behavioral health system impacts the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral health conditions. Untreated behavioral health conditions are often cited as major contributors to many societal ills including homelessness and violence. Less severe behavioral health conditions, untreated because of limited access to providers or the stigmatization of behavioral health conditions, may lead to expensive inpatient care or prolonged outpatient care. It is to everyone’s benefit that there is a strong robust behavioral health system in the State. A strong behavioral health system includes a capable and qualified workforce, up-to-date data and information systems, and agencies that can assess and respond to the behavioral health needs of Maryland citizens.

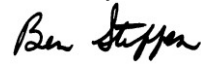


The proposed work of the Commission is extensive and comprehensive looking at all aspects of a behavioral health system continuum.

The issues to be addressed under this Commission aligns with many of the areas of focus for the MHCC. We are pleased to be named to this Commission and look forward to being an active participant.

If you any questions or would like to discuss this legislation or our existing efforts, please contact Ben Steffen, Executive Director, Maryland Health Care Commission at ben.steffen@maryland.gov or Tracey DeShields, Director of Policy Development and External Affairs at tracey.deshields2@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Ben Steffen,
Executive Director

