



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

Good afternoon. I am Sheryl Neverson, Senior Vice President at Volunteers of America of the Chesapeake and Carolinas region. Founded in 1896, we are a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower self-reliance through housing, health, and human services that benefit vulnerable individuals, their families and the community. Every year, we serve 3000 Maryland residents with mental health and addiction treating, housing and job support programs.

Volunteers of America is one of the organizations receiving a federal grant to develop a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model at our Prince George's and Baltimore County locations. In conjunction with the grant, we were able to make critical investments in infrastructure and services that allowed us to better meet the needs of the communities we serve. We were able to provide a continuum of mental health, substance-use and primary care services to individuals with chronic addiction, serious mental illness and complex health problems.

With the CCBHC grant, we were able to:

- Increase our behavioral health workforce by 30 new hires;
- Increase integrated behavioral health and primary care services to 810 individuals during the height of the pandemic;
- Demonstrate positive client health outcomes across key outcome metrics; and
- In Year Two, increased Medicaid and Medicare enrollment by 362 clients.

Unfortunately, our application to renew our Maryland CCBHC grant was denied in 2022, even as our application to expand our CCBHC into the District of Columbia was awarded.

One of the key aspects of the CCBHC model is that it allows providers to treat anyone seeking care for a mental health or addiction need, regardless of their ability to pay. Immigration, citizenship status, or high-deductible insurance plans can all create barriers to getting needed mental health or substance-use treatment. Volunteers of America took on clients unable to pay for care through our CCBHC grant.

Despite losing the grant, we continue to serve these uninsured individuals in the hopes that we will be able to apply for a new round of CCBHC funding. If we are unable to secure a grant this year, we will anticipate having to discharge these individuals, with few to no options for uninsured individuals with serious mental health and addiction needs to receive treatment elsewhere.

The CCBHC model is vital to helping organizations like mine better meet the needs of their communities, and Maryland can sustain and expand this model through a Medicaid state plan amendment.

I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB1148. Thank you for your attention.