



HB 1148
Behavioral Health Care – Treatment and Access
(Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 28, 2023

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports House Bill 1148 which would create a Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access, establish a value-based purchasing pilot program, expand certified community behavioral health clinics, and extend telehealth provisions established in the wake of COVID.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors. We recognize the importance of creating and maintaining a strong public behavioral health system in Maryland.

We are encouraged by the attention and focus that behavioral health is receiving. Our system was strained with the double crises of COVID and the failed ASO transition. It's time to rebuild it. The creation of a Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access will allow us to take a comprehensive approach to rebuilding our system. We greatly appreciate that youth are a focus of one of the workgroups. However, we respectfully request that they not be combined with the “individuals with complex behavioral health needs” population. Youth are very different from adults and as such their needs are different. They are different physiologically, they interact different systems, they have different rights and unlike adults, successful treatment for a youth cannot be isolated from the family, as a whole. Combining youth with individuals with complex needs into one workgroup ignores the unique needs of youth at all levels of care. There is also a fear that it would take away from the need to focus on rebuilding both low intensity and high intensity community supports for children. **We strongly suggest creating a separate workgroup that focuses solely on youth and adding commission members who specifically can address the needs of youth including youth serving providers and organizations representing families.**

We appreciate the inclusion of value-based payments, certified community health centers and the renewal of the telehealth flexibilities in the bill. We fully support those aspects.

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for House Bill 1148

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy