

TONY BRIDGES  
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Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

To: The Honorable Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Delegate Tony Bridges, Legislative District 41

Re: **Support** - House Bill 1155 - Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model

Date: March 14th, 2023

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 1155. This legislation is for the purpose of establishing a work group that can advise Maryland on how to effectively establish the Youth Codesign Integrated Behavioral Health Model. The Youth Codesign Integrated Behavioral Health Model constitutes a new approach to helping youth who suffer from mental health issues.

Young people routinely have difficulty finding timely mental health support and services that respond to their needs. As a result, many do not receive appropriate care until their mental health challenges become more severe, difficult and costly to treat. Early intervention programs that are integrated and co-designed with youth can provide accessible, comprehensive, user-centered mental health care.

In the field of youth mental health, we recognize that young people are experts in their own lives, and we should take action to maximize their participation in the decisions that affect them, whether that be in their direct care, service design, quality improvement or evaluation. The youth codesign model is a model in which youth are not only the recipients of services, but are partners in all elements of that service, including implementation, evaluation, and the evolution of services. Integrated youth behavioral health care is an enhanced primary care model, typically with a single, visible, trusted location, including providers organized as a dedicated team of clinical and nonclinical personnel, such as a peer worker, providing the full spectrum of care for a youth and their family.

- Co-designed programs offer more relevant and appropriate services because the process brings together people with varied life experiences, cultures, beliefs, educational background, and expertise.
- The co-design process is flexible, allowing teams to use approaches that are best suited to their community's needs and test and refine concepts before developing a final program.

- Co-design promotes a culture of genuine partnership in decision-making and the creative thinking and reflection needed to identify and develop appropriate solutions.

The most prominent example of the youth-centered, youth co-designed model in the United States is Allcove, a pilot program launched in California in 2021. Allcove centers welcome young people ages 12 to 25 with mild to moderate needs looking for support. Allcove has experienced success in developing an innovative network of integrated youth mental health centers designed with, by and for youth that reduce stigma, embrace mental wellness, increase community connection, and provide access to culturally responsive services.

Effectively treating mental health issues in adolescents is key. The Youth Codesign Integrated Behavioral Health Model de-stigmatizes mental health treatment and creates a youth friendly environment that fosters effective treatment, and Maryland's youth would benefit from its implementation. For these reasons I ask the committee for a favorable report.