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**Date:** February 28, 2023

**Bill # / Title:** House Bill 1148 – Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)

**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee

**Position:** Support

The Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) appreciates the opportunity to share its support for House Bill 1148.

House Bill 1148 seeks to do several things. First, it establishes the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access 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 Commission will be composed of 32 members representing various state agencies (including a representative of the MIA), elected officials, health care providers, and other behavioral health stakeholders. The bill also establishes a Behavioral Health Care Coordination Value-Based Purchasing Pilot Program to implement and evaluate a reimbursement program to financially incentivize providers to meet specified outcome measures in the specialty behavioral health system under Medicaid. It requires the Department of Health to submit a state plan amendment to CMS to establish certified community behavioral health clinics in Maryland and provide for Medicaid coverage of services provided by, and reimbursement to, certified community behavioral health clinics. Finally, the bill makes several amendments to telehealth coverage, including extending the sunset on both the requirement that coverage for telehealth include coverage of audio-only conversations, and the requirement that carriers reimburse providers for telehealth services, including audio-only visits, on the same basis and at the same rate as in in-person visits.

Following the 2022 Legislative Session, it was requested that the MIA form a workgroup to review the concerns raised by certain stakeholders about an unsuccessful bill raised during the Session, that sought to establish a program to aid consumers seeking behavioral health services. Throughout the course of these Workgroup meetings, members examined the availability and scope of programs that currently exist in Maryland to provide necessary behavioral health services and identified gaps that remained. While the Workgroup was unable to reach consensus on all issues it was tasked with exploring, members were able to agree that people who need behavioral health treatment in Maryland often struggle to find providers and,

in addition, struggle to secure health plan coverage for the treatment that they need. Further, members agreed that while many governmental, government sponsored/funded, and private programs exist that may provide some behavioral health services in some geographic regions, significant gaps still exist in the State due to the lack of a centralized state-wide resource to assist consumers to locate care and secure coverage.

House Bill 1148 has a critically needed focus on laying groundwork to develop a statewide system that can provide behavioral health care efficiently and cost-effectively in Maryland. In 2020, one in five American adults experienced a mental health issue.<sup>1</sup> However, there continues to be a disparity between need and access to behavioral health services due to many factors, including location and income-level. This bill is attempting to bridge that gap, and begin examining and addressing barriers to care that currently exist in the State. In addressing those barriers, this bill will also benefit Marylanders above and beyond those with behavioral health needs. It will allow state residents to continue to benefit from the expanded coverage of telehealth services, which can increase access to health care for consumers who do not have convenient access to in-person services or virtual audio-visual services due to geographic limitations or technology/infrastructure issues.

The MIA supports House Bill 1148 and its goal of improving access to, and modernizing, behavioral health care in Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of House Bill 1148. The MIA is available to provide additional information and assistance to the Committee.

<sup>1</sup> [www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/mental-health-myths-facts](http://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/mental-health-myths-facts)