

Testimony of Work Life Behavioral Health and Professional Training Owner

LaToya Nkongolo, LCSW-C, LCADC

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Before the

Ways and Means Committee

Hearing on

HB1107

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I would like to submit my written testimony in support of HB 1107. My name is LaToya Nkongolo, and I am a licensed clinical social worker, licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor. My husband and I own Work Life Behavioral Health, address 7310 Ritchie Hwy., Suite 307, Glen Burnie, MD, 21061 in Anne Arundel County. Our clientele consists of individuals as young as age 4 receiving mental health services, both in person, teletherapy and in home. Many live across Anne Arundel county in suburban and rural areas and many have limited access to transportation and internet services. Approximately 66% of clients are African American, Hispanic, and Asian; 54% of our recipients have Medicaid insurance, approximately 31% have private insurance, and 15% self-pay for services. Nearly 1,000 Anne Arundel County youth residents trust us with their mental health counseling services. My hope is to offer you some insight into my daily practice experience as a mental health provider to school aged children. I would like to share how various populations are benefitting from mental health services:

Youth are consistently attending sessions as referred by the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency Crisis Warmline, school and parents.

DSS Clients: School Aged Youth who are required to receive counseling services have been able to comply this requirement while school, work, sports and other responsibilities are not interrupted.

Conclusion:

- There has been an increase in referrals for school aged youth since the start of the pandemic.
- There has been a reduction of missed appointments which has allowed patients to be more consistent with treatment and to transition to weekly, biweekly or monthly therapy sessions.
- School aged youth in the criminal justice and child welfare systems are better able to meet the requirements of said systems while balancing school and other responsibilities.

Thank you all for considering the critical need for school aged youth to have easy access and less barriers to receiving mental health therapy services. I hope that you consider supporting Bill 1107 to increase access to treatment and to streamline services for our most vulnerable population, school aged youth.