

inseparable

Senate Finance Committee

February 13, 2024

Senate Bill 124

Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance— Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits—Coverage and Reimbursement Support

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Inseparable, I am writing to urge your support of SB0124, which will require providers to be reimbursed by Medicaid and commercial insurance for a behavioral health wellness visit. This bill will reduce barriers to care and reduce disparities for people experiencing mental health and substance use disorders. Inseparable is a nonprofit focused on closing the treatment gap for people with mental health conditions, improving crisis response, and supporting youth mental health.

Youth and adults continue to face alarming rates of mental health challenges. In fact, The Business Group on Health's [2024 Large Employer Health Care Strategy Survey](#) reports that mental health challenges are the top health concern impacting employers. 77% of employers reported an increase in mental health concerns this year and, according to the report, are highly focused on increasing access to mental health services, including lowering cost barriers to care.

SB0124 would provide exactly the kind of policy change that employers, individuals, and families need. Many people, including employers, assume that an initial behavioral health visit will be covered, regardless of whether there's a diagnosis, as is common in physical health. Unfortunately, that is not the case—and it creates a real barrier to the very early identification and intervention that could provide both youth and adults the help they need *before* their symptoms become more severe and harder and more costly to treat. This bill would change that and require plans to cover an initial behavioral health assessment, and to reimburse a provider at the same rate, regardless of whether the visit results in a diagnosed condition. To date, six states, CO, CT, DE, IL, MA, and NM, have enacted similar commonsense legislation to cover annual behavioral health wellness visits.

Inseparable is grateful to Senator Augustine for introducing SB0124 and we respectfully urge a favorable report by the Committee.

Respectfully,



Angela Kimball
Chief Advocacy Officer