



Maryland Counseling Association, Inc. is a Branch of the American Counseling Association  
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02/07/24

The Honorable Senator Malcom Augustine  
**Finance Committee**  
3 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY FOR SB124** – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance  
– Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Coverage and Reimbursement

Dear Senator Augustine,

Thank you for sponsoring SB124 and taking steps to address an essential need for moving in wellness. We appreciate the Finance committee taking the time to read and accept our written testimony regarding annual behavioral health wellness visits. The Maryland Counseling Association (MCA) continues to engage with our state elected officials who represent those who we serve as well as members of our professional body. Our membership covers all counties throughout the state of Maryland with 500 members and counting.

Incorporating annual behavioral health wellness visits is a foundational step to supporting and encouraging wellness in Maryland. An individual can gain valuable knowledge and direction from understanding how she/they/he/zir are experiencing the world as well as how challenges are impacting states of wellness.

There are many assessments to achieve goals of determining one's wellness indicators. Each behavioral health assessment has criteria for which credentialed professionals can administer and interpret these assessments and inventories. MCA supports the committee for specifying that qualifying licensed and certified professionals authorized by the Health Occupations Article to

practice a health occupation and whose scope is in mental health and/or substance abuse care is designated to provide the annual behavioral health wellness visits.

To conduct the annual visits ethically and efficaciously the provider may need two to three visits. The reason for multiple visits is to administer, review, and provide psychoeducation. Depending on the assessments and inventories a person may need to complete in multiple visits/sessions. Has the committee allotted for the annual visit to be multiple visits? In SB124, section 15-861(C), (2), line 18 it reads for reimbursement to be for one visit.

We would recommend one revision to this bill, to specify that an annual behavioral wellness visit can be up to three sessions/visits.

Sincerely,

***Kerri***

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