



February 6, 2024

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB 418 – Grant Applications and Reporting - Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council - Alterations

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment, crisis response, and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 418 – Grant Applications and Reporting - Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council – Alterations as this would assist the Council to fulfill its mission and implement its recommendations for improving grant application and management processes across state government.

Across state government, basic budgetary and organizational information required for grant applications and financial reporting, as well as invoicing and monitoring policies, vary greatly among state agencies. This variability leads to duplication of effort, and to conflicting ‘business practices’ adopted on a program-by-program basis, and imposes unnecessary hardships on grantees. The lack of standardization also inhibits efficiencies that could be obtained at the State level by streamlining common steps and processes, and the development of effective state-level tracking or accountability.

As a non-profit LBHA, BHSB manages 38 different funding awards from the state totaling approximately \$53 million to support the behavioral health needs of the people in Baltimore City. Most of the funding BHSB receives is from the Behavioral Health Administration and even within this agency, grant application and management processes vary widely. Having uniform grant application forms, financial controls, and reporting requirements would allow BHSB to streamline its operations and redirect resources to focus on access to behavioral health services for people in Baltimore City.

BHSB is grateful to the General Assembly for establishing the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council and their continued focus on supporting non-profit organizations. **As such, BHSB urges the House and Government Operations Committee to pass HB 418.**

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