

HB0400\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
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**TESTIMONY ON HB#/0400 – FAVORABLE**

**Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement**

**TO:** Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

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**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0400, Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement**

The pandemic has caused a precipitous increase in mental health issues in our children. Nationally, the number of children ages 3 to 17 who experienced anxiety or depression increased by 25% from 9.4% in 2016 to 11.8% in 2020. The figures are based on those either diagnosed with or reported to have those symptoms by a doctor or health care provider.

During that same timeframe, Maryland ranked 13th in the nation with a 36% increase of children ages 3 to 17 with anxiety or depression either reported to or diagnosed by a doctor or health care provider. <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/09/26/report-md-children-and-youth-continue-to-experience-mental-health-challenges/>

This bill says that behavioral health is as important as physical health and should be a covered service so that everyone can maintain and improve their mental health without cost of care being the primary consideration on seeking those services. Mental health issues affect not only the person involved but their friends, family, co-workers or students, and the community at large. This bill calls on us to respond ethically and morally to the issue of caring for and about each other and providing for that care to every individual.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0400.**