



March 4, 2025

**House Appropriations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB1049 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Funding

The Affiliated Sante Group (Santé) is a nonprofit behavioral health outpatient and crisis response provider in Maryland. Sante is the largest provider of crisis response services in Maryland, and we have been providing crisis response services for over 25 years.

Santé strongly supports HB1049 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program – Funding.

This bill would provide level funding to the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program for the next three years to maintain critical behavioral health care services.

The Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program was established in 2019 to build a more robust behavioral health crisis response system. These types of services provide immediate support when someone is experiencing serious emotional distress or crisis. Crisis services such as mobile crisis teams, urgent care clinics, and crisis residential beds are essential components of the behavioral health care continuum and provide an important alternative to calling 911 or going to the hospital Emergency Department.

The General Assembly mandated \$5 million for the last four years and the Behavioral Health Administration indicated that they plan to maintain it at this level for FY26. This stable funding has been used effectively to serve thousands of children and adults experiencing a crisis. It is also a smart investment that saves the state money in the long run by preventing higher hospital and criminal justice costs. Hospital EDs and the criminal justice system are not the appropriate setting to help resolve a crisis or help someone to stabilize. They are chaotic and not designed with mental health crises in mind. They are also expensive. The alternative interventions that are funded by this program must be maintained, especially considering the struggles the state continues to have with pediatric hospital overstay and lengthy ED wait times.

The crisis grant funding enables Santé to provide crisis services for 8 jurisdictions in Maryland. Through this funding Carroll County operates mobile crisis services for adults and youth 16 hours a day, 7 days a week including ability for direct law enforcement dispatch through police radios. These services have resulted in over:

- 8500 crisis calls,
- Over 2000 dispatches with 22% of those being minors, and

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- Over 107 community education events over the last 3 years.

Additionally, the funding allows an expansion of urgent care services to youth in Baltimore County. Through this funding we provided:

- 2000 diagnostic evaluations and
- 1500 psychiatric medication evaluations which have assisted in diverting individuals from hospitalization.

Lastly, the funding received through this grant provides child and adolescent mobile crisis services across 8 counties on the Eastern Shore. On average, we annually conduct:

- 2000 335 dispatches for youth and adolescents,
- Diverted 86 minors from the emergency room and
- Diverted 27 minors from the criminal justice system last year.
- Provided 71 referrals to outpatient mental health clinic services.

The loss of funding for these services would result in job loss of employees and significant reduction of community-based supports for youth, adolescent, families, and adults in crisis. This would further result in increases in hospital and criminal justice involvement. More specifically, for Carroll County, the loss of funding would result in the closing of the county's mobile crisis services.

Continuing funding for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program is a smart investment. **Santé urges the House Appropriations Committee to pass HB1049.**

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