



ON OUR OWN
OF MARYLAND

onourownmd.org

7310 Esquire Court
Mailbox 14
Elkridge, MD 21075

410.540.9020

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 599: Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Funding

Thank you Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and committee members for your commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services for Marylanders, especially community members who experience significant behavioral health challenges. On Our Own of Maryland (OOOMD) is a nonprofit behavioral health education and advocacy organization, operating for 30+ years by and for people with lived experience of mental health and substance use recovery.

OOOMD is in strong support of SB 599, which would invest \$5 million in annual funding to re-authorize the Crisis Response Grant program beginning fiscal year 2027-2029. This would ensure mobile crisis services, urgent crisis walk-in centers, crisis stabilization centers, and more would be able to continue providing accessible emergency supports to community members to save lives and divert unnecessary and costly hospitalizations.

Through this grant funding, crucial crisis services were able to be implemented in rural regions of Maryland, where behavioral health supports are already limited. Prior to this program, Western Maryland and Eastern Shore had 1 mobile crisis team. This funding expanded access to Youth Mobile Crisis Services in the Eastern Shore, and Adult Mobile Crisis Services in both Western and Southern Maryland.

Delivering crisis response services in a timely and trauma-informed manner requires adequate resources to maintain strong infrastructure. Dedicating funding to support these community-based services decreases reliance on law enforcement as the default available responder for BH crisis scenarios, with important immediate and long-term positive impact for individuals and families. Too often, we hear people report frightening, unhelpful, and stigmatizing experiences due to non-specialty emergency responders' lack of understanding or skill. These bad experiences not only hurt or harm in the moment, but they create lasting mistrust and resistance to engaging with crisis services in the future.

We urge you to vote in favor of this crucial bill. Thank you.