



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

March 6, 2025

Senate Bill 599 – *Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program – Funding*

POSITION: SUPPORT

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC) and the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work (GWSCSW), we submit this letter in strong support of Senate Bill 599. This legislation is essential to ensuring sustained funding for Maryland’s crisis behavioral health system by directing the Governor to include an annual appropriation of \$5,000,000 for each fiscal year from 2027 to 2029.

Crisis behavioral health services play a critical role in protecting the well-being of Marylanders experiencing mental health and substance use emergencies. The Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program has been instrumental in strengthening community-based crisis intervention services that reduce reliance on emergency departments and law enforcement. In 2024, Governor Wes Moore allocated \$13.5 million to 19 jurisdictions, expanding access to these life-saving programs and prioritizing health equity and timely behavioral health care. Investments, such as the Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System (GBRICS) Partnership, a \$45 million, five-year initiative, have demonstrated success in reducing police involvement, improving access to immediate support, and diverting individuals away from costly hospitalizations.

For individuals in crisis, these programs provide a compassionate and effective alternative to traditional emergency response systems. By expanding access to mobile crisis teams, stabilization services, and community-based care, Senate Bill 599 will ensure that those in distress receive timely interventions, preventing further deterioration of their mental health. Early intervention reduces emergency department visits, prevents unnecessary interactions with the criminal justice system, and helps individuals achieve long-term stability in their communities.

Sustained and predictable funding is essential to maintaining and expanding these services, particularly in underserved areas where access to mental health care remains limited. Without this investment, many Marylanders will face increased barriers to crisis support, putting them at greater risk of adverse outcomes, including hospitalization, homelessness, and avoidable encounters with law enforcement.

For these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable vote on Senate Bill 599 to strengthen Maryland’s crisis behavioral health system and ensure that individuals in crisis receive the care they need, when and where they need it.

For more information call:

Christine K. Krone
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000