

MARCH 6, 2025

SHORE PROGRESS

SENATE BILL 599: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM - FUNDING

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, & Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

Shore Progress is proud to support Senate Bill 599, which ensures continued funding of \$5 million annually for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program. This legislation is critical to addressing the mental health crisis across Maryland and ensuring equitable access to behavioral health services for all residents, regardless of their geographic location.

Maryland's Eastern Shore communities continue to experience severe healthcare disparities, particularly in behavioral health. Rural residents face higher rates of mental health disorders, substance use disorders, and suicide, yet they have fewer providers, longer wait times, and higher barriers to care. These residents also lack access to crisis intervention services, resulting in delayed or insufficient treatment, higher rates of emergency room visits, and preventable hospitalizations.

Without continued funding, the progress Maryland has made in expanding crisis response services will be at risk. Local jurisdictions need long-term financial stability to maintain and grow these programs. Senate Bill 599 guarantees this funding through 2029, allowing communities to plan for sustainable, long-term improvements in their behavioral health infrastructure.

Senate Bill 599 will help ensure that all Marylanders, regardless of where they live, have access to essential mental health services. Shore Progress urges a favorable report.

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