



March 5, 2025

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 859 - Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2025

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

BHSB supports SB859 - Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2025 as a well-designed initiative to bring in new revenues from progressive sources. Maryland faces a \$3 billion FY26 budget deficit and a growing structural budget deficit. More revenue is desperately needed to meet Maryland’s obligations and the Fair Share Plan is a strong proposal to do so.

Maryland is currently facing an extreme behavioral health workforce shortage. A recent report showed that the state needed more than 32,000 new behavioral health professionals to address the shortage.¹ Providers will continue to struggle filling jobs, salaries will spiral upwards, and Marylanders will go without care. This workforce shortage also contributes to the crisis at Maryland’s forensic psychiatric hospitals, where there are many month backlogs to discharge and accept new patients. Violence against staff is common and individuals with behavioral disabilities languish in jail waiting for treatment. These are just two of the demands facing our state that will require additional funding to address.

Unfortunately, the state does not have any new resources to address these challenges. Indeed, we are facing the prospect of cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from existing behavioral health services. The only way to maintain adequate services and to have fiscal flexibility to solve problems is to raise additional revenue.

The Fair Share for Maryland Act is a reasonable proposal to address the state’s fiscal challenges. This bill is crafted to make Maryland’s tax system fairer for middle- and working-class families and small businesses by closing corporate loopholes and raising taxes on millionaires and the top 1% of earners. The provisions of HB 1014 will bring in \$1.6 billion in new revenues annually to address behavioral health and other critical state priorities. **BHSB urges the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee to go beyond the revenues included in the Governor’s Budget proposal and support SB859.**

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142

Endnotes:

¹ Maryland Health Care Commission. Investing in Maryland’s Behavioral Health Talent. October 2024. https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/plr/plr/documents/2024/md_bh_workforce_rpt_SB283.pdf