



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 6<sup>th</sup> , 2025

SB599

**Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Funding  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 599**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Funding seeks to ensure consistent and necessary financial support for behavioral health crisis response services by requiring the Governor to allocate funding in the annual budget for the program in designated fiscal years. By securing this funding, the bill strengthens Maryland's ability to provide immediate, community-based crisis intervention for individuals experiencing behavioral health emergencies, reducing reliance on emergency rooms and law enforcement for mental health crises. A well-funded crisis response system ensures that individuals in distress receive appropriate care, leading to better health outcomes, reduced hospitalizations, and decreased strain on public safety resources.

Every individual, regardless of their circumstances, deserves access to compassionate and effective mental health care. Failing to provide adequate crisis response services leaves vulnerable individuals without the support they need, exacerbating suffering and deepening social inequalities. The Catholic commitment to healing and care for the most vulnerable calls for policies that prioritize mental health services and ensure that individuals in crisis receive timely, humane, and professional support.

This funding helps to reduce the burden on emergency rooms, law enforcement, and social services, allowing first responders to focus on public safety while trained behavioral health professionals address mental health emergencies. Ensuring that crisis response teams are adequately funded allows for preventive care, early intervention, and long-term recovery support, which benefits individuals, families, and society.

A strong behavioral health crisis response system creates a more just and equitable healthcare framework, ensuring that mental health emergencies are treated with the same urgency and dignity as physical health crises. Maryland has a moral obligation to invest in services that protect human dignity, alleviate suffering, and promote holistic well-being. By funding the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program, the state can save lives,

strengthen communities, and build a more compassionate and responsive healthcare system for all.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 599**.