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Testimony on SB592

Health Care Quality Fund for Community-Based Behavioral Health Programs

February 18, 2025

Senate Finance Committee

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 592. CBH is the leading voice for community-based providers serving the mental health and addiction needs of vulnerable Marylanders. Our 87 members serve the majority of individuals accessing care through Maryland's public behavioral health system. These providers deliver vital outpatient and residential treatment, day programs, case management, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), employment supports, and crisis intervention services to those in need.

Senate Bill 592 ensures civil monetary penalties (CMPs) imposed on behavioral health providers are reinvested into workforce development and quality improvement initiatives. Maryland's behavioral health system faces a severe workforce crisis that directly impacts access to essential mental health and substance use disorder services. The demand for behavioral health care has grown significantly, yet providers continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining qualified professionals. These shortages have led to service delays, increased caseloads for existing staff, and a diminished ability to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents. Without targeted intervention, this crisis will persist, exacerbating the challenges faced by both providers and the individuals they serve.

Senate Bill 592 takes a proactive approach to addressing this crisis by ensuring CMP funds are dedicated to workforce development and quality improvement. These funds will directly support training initiatives that equip behavioral health professionals with the necessary skills to provide high-quality care. Additionally, they will bolster recruitment and retention efforts, allowing providers to stabilize their workforce and expand service capacity. A structured reinvestment strategy is essential to prevent CMPs from unintentionally straining providers who are already facing financial and staffing hardships.

Allocating CMPs into a Health Care Quality fund ensures that they are not treated as a general revenue source but rather reinvested into behavioral health quality improvement efforts. This legislation follows Maryland's approach for assisted living facilities, ensuring that the use of these funds is transparent, accountable, and directly benefits community-based behavioral health providers.

Beyond penalties, this initiative leverages CMPs as a catalyst for continuous quality improvement. Funds will be directed toward training programs, grants, and innovative projects that enhance service delivery, strengthen provider compliance



with state regulations, and encourage best practices across the behavioral health system. By proactively addressing deficiencies through education and targeted support, Senate Bill 592 helps providers meet regulatory standards while fostering continual quality improvement. As amended, this bill will help ensure penalties remain focused on serious violations—such as operating without a license or failing to correct life-threatening deficiencies—while capping fines at \$10,000 per violation to avoid placing excessive financial burdens on providers.

By creating a structured and transparent reinvestment model, Senate Bill 592 will help strengthen Maryland’s behavioral health workforce, improve service quality, and increase access to care. It ensures that CMPs serve a constructive purpose, reinforcing provider accountability while enhancing patient outcomes.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 592.

For more information contact *Nicole Graner, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy*, at 240-994-8113 or Nicole@MDCBH.org