



March 6, 2026

Senate Finance Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
SB 876 - Recovery Residences - Certification - Requirement

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.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports and offers amendments for SB 876 - Recovery Residences - Certification - Requirement. This bill would ensure proper oversight and quality assurance at recovery residences.

Recovery residences provide housing that supports recovery from substance use disorders. They do not provide clinical treatment but are important stepping stones for many people early in recovery. Maryland has a certification process that many recovery residences go through but that is not currently required. There are several hundred certified recovery residences and potentially hundreds more that are uncertified.

SB876 would require recovery residences to become certified to operate as a recovery residence in Maryland. This is a critical step to ensure high-quality and safe environments for these vulnerable individuals. In Baltimore City, there have been frequent reports of unsafe environments at recovery residences and a lack of responsiveness to community and resident concerns, some of which have been reported in the press. The complete lack of oversight for uncertified recovery residences has resulted in the exploitation of residences and poor treatment outcomes like relapse or overdose. The state must take action to ensure recovery residences follow basic safety and support standards.

While recovery housing does not provide clinical treatment, it does provide a specialized environment designed to serve a population that has specific needs and vulnerabilities. Those needs and vulnerabilities dictate basic expectations that should be met by any recovery residence. The current certification process would ensure this basic safety and support without overly burdening the programs or infringing on the rights of individuals diagnosed with substance use disorders.

Recovery residence quality is a critical issue, especially in Baltimore. Requiring these programs to meet a basic standard is a reasonable approach to begin addressing these issues. **We urge the Senate Finance Committee to pass SB 876.**

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