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**SB 39 - Behavioral Health – Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics and
Outpatient Mental Health Centers – Reimbursement Rates
Senate Finance Committee
March 3, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 39. On behalf of AARP Maryland and our 850,000 members across the state, I urge the committee to pass Senate Bill 39, Behavioral Health-Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics and Outpatient Mental Health Centers-Reimbursement Rates. We thank Senator Lam for sponsoring this important legislation.

My name is Dr. Lois Meszaros, and I am a licensed psychologist with a clinical practice in Anne Arundel County. As a mental health care provider, I am acutely aware of the shortage of both behavioral health services and trained mental health staff. After retiring and moving back to Sevena Park, I immediately began receiving calls from older adults who said Novitas Solutions, Inc., which manages the insurance for Medicare patients, recommended they contact me because I was new to the area and accepting new patients. These older adults were having difficulty locating a therapist who was taking new patients and would accept Medicare. Many therapists are not accepting new patients, are private-pay only, and are overwhelmed with referrals.

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) are designed to ensure access to coordinated, comprehensive behavioral health care. They get people into services quickly and provide crisis services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are required to serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age. This includes older adults in need of behavioral health or substance use services and helps to close a gap for much-needed services. CCBHCs help older adults navigate behavioral health care, physical health care, social services and other systems in which they are involved. The State has operated CCBHCs under federal grant funding since 2018, which is not sustainable. The State should transition from grant funding to a rate methodology model to maintain these essential services.

Outpatient mental health centers (OMHC) are vital to the State's behavioral health system, providing community-based treatment for individuals with serious mental health conditions. They are in a financial crisis due to inadequate reimbursement rates. Replacing the current system with a rate methodology would sustain these vital services.

This bill establishes a Workgroup on the Implementation and Rate Methodology for Certified Behavioral Health Clinics within the Behavioral Health Administration. It requires the Maryland

Department of Health to conduct a rate study of outpatient mental health services and to convene a rate reform advisory panel to review and approve a rate methodology. The Workgroup shall submit its findings to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than December 1, 2027.

A review of funding methods and reimbursement rates is necessary to maintain and enhance Maryland's behavioral health care system.

As such, AARP Maryland respectfully urges a **favorable report** on SB 39.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick at swestrick@aarpm.org or by calling 410-310-0374.