



Voices of Hope, Inc

Bill: HB 0886 Certified Peer Recovery Specialists - Coverage Under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance and Workgroup on Certification

FROM: Sherry Matthews

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: February 17, 2026

Favorable Testimony – HB0886

HB0886 is a critical step toward strengthening Maryland's behavioral health system by recognizing and sustainably funding the role of **Certified Peer Recovery Specialists (CPRS)**. This bill requires the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, health maintenance organizations, and managed care organizations to cover peer recovery services **in any setting**, ensuring individuals can access support where they are most likely to engage and succeed.

Peers with lived experience play a unique and proven role in recovery. They build trust, reduce stigma, and help individuals navigate complex systems of care—often serving as the bridge between crisis and treatment, and between treatment and long-term recovery. By mandating coverage across payers and

settings, HB0886 removes unnecessary barriers and allows peer services to be integrated consistently into Maryland's continuum of care.

Equally important, HB0886 requires the Maryland Department of Health to convene a workgroup to examine and strengthen the **certification process for peer recovery specialists**. This ensures quality, accountability, and consistency while preserving the core value of lived experience. Establishing a clear and state-recognized certification pathway is essential for long-term sustainability and for restoring Medicaid reimbursement peer services in Maryland.

For peer-based organizations, treatment centers, hospitals, law-enforcement assisted diversion programs to name a few, HB0886 means greater stability, reduced reliance on short-term grant funding, and the ability to expand peer-led services that prevent overdose, improve engagement in care, and support recovery for individuals and families across the state.

HB0886 is not just a funding bill—it is a workforce bill, a public health bill, and a recovery bill. It affirms that peer recovery specialists are an essential part of Maryland's behavioral health infrastructure and deserve the same recognition and reimbursement as other evidence-based providers.

Voices of Hope strongly supports HB0886 and urges a favorable report.

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