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**Date:** February 19, 2026

**Committee:** House Health Committee

**Bill:** House Bill 886- Certified Peer Recovery Specialists - Coverage Under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance and Workgroup on Certification

**Position:** Favorable

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Gaudenzia offers this testimony in support House Bill 886 (HB 886).

Gaudenzia was founded in 1968 by a conscientious group of community members who wanted to help themselves and each other overcome the challenges of drug and alcohol use. They soon learned that a collective group was much stronger than an individual, struggling alone. Over the next 55 years, Gaudenzia began serving those in need of treatment for substance use and co-occurring disorders, becoming one of the nation's first providers with programs designed to meet the needs of individuals with substance use or co-occurring disorders, including those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS or under criminal justice involvement. Today, Gaudenzia is one of the largest non-profit substance use and co-occurring disorders treatment providers in the northeast United States, serving Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the Washington, D.C. areas. More information is available at [www.gaudenzia.org](http://www.gaudenzia.org).

Certified peer recovery specialists are individuals who have lived experience with addiction and recovery and have completed formal training and credentialing to support others in their sobriety journeys. They serve as mentors, advocates, and facilitators of hope, using their first-hand insights to help clients navigate treatment options, access community resources, and develop practical recovery plans. Their presence in addiction treatment and recovery services is important. Peer recovery specialists help reduce stigma by normalizing recovery and modeling realistic pathways to change, which can increase engagement and retention in treatment. They often reach individuals who may be distrustful of traditional clinical settings. By assisting with transition planning, navigating insurance and service systems, and connecting clients to peer-led support groups, they help sustain long-term recovery and reduce relapse risk.

HB 886 appropriately acknowledges the value of certified peer recovery specialists, who in many ways are providing holistic case management services in mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment settings. Requiring insurance carriers to reimburse providers for these services corrects an overlooked mental health parity issue, insofar as similar case management services, e.g., transitional care management, are currently reimbursable in medical settings.

For the aforementioned reasons, Gaudenzia respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 886.

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