



COMMISSION ON AGING

TESTIMONY ON SB0663 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Collaborative Care Model - Cost Sharing Prohibition

TO: Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health Committee

FROM: Linda Bergofsky and Wayne Berman, Co-Chairs, Montgomery County Commission on Aging

We writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) in support of **SB0428 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Collaborative Care Model - Cost Sharing Prohibition**. The CoA was established by Montgomery County in 1974 pursuant to a requirement of the Federal Older Americans Act of 1965, that there be an Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging. In that role, the CoA serves as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's older residents at the local, State, and National levels. SB0468 supports a priority of the Commission and of our constituents, specifically equitable access to high-quality and integrated behavioral health services.

This bill will ensure that Marylanders receiving integrated behavioral health care through the Collaborative Care Model have no out-of-pocket costs. It removes financial barriers to getting behavioral health conditions identified and treated in primary care settings. More than 50% of older adults with behavioral health conditions do not receive specialty treatment, largely due to stigma, cost, language, and transportation challenges. To address this gap, behavioral health conditions are best identified and treated early on in their presentation in primary care settings. The Collaborative Care Model is an evidence-based approach to integrating behavioral and physical healthcare, enabling older adults to receive screening, treatment, and ongoing monitoring in the familiar setting of their primary care. For many older adults managing multiple chronic illnesses, mobility limitations, or social isolation, this integrated model is the difference between untreated behavioral health needs and early, effective intervention. Eliminating cost-sharing helps ensure that behavioral health is treated like any other essential component care, particularly important for older adults have to less access to disposable income.

For these reasons, the Commission on Aging respectfully urges the return of a Favorable decision for SB0428.

Department of Health and Human Services

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