



Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee

FAVORABLE

**Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

**HB 935 Behavioral Health System Modernization Act
Submitted by
Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee**

March 9, 2022

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass and the Respected Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) is pleased to support HB 935 Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion (Behavioral Health System Modernization Act).

MHAC was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive and the County Council on matters concerning mental health. Our work includes providing citizen oversight to all state-funded mental health agencies serving Montgomery County and serving as an advocate for a comprehensive mental health system for persons of all ages. The Committee helps to ensure that publicly-funded mental health services are responsive to local needs, accountable to the citizenry and accessible to those in need. Our work includes closely following State and County legislative proposals relating to mental health. MHAC is comprised of citizen members who serve three-year terms without compensation that includes practicing physicians in the County, mental health professionals in the County who are not physicians and individuals who are currently receiving or have in the past received mental health services as well as agency members that includes the Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public schools, and the Department of Juvenile Services.

HB 935 Behavioral Health System Modernization Act is critical. This bill includes a variety of reforms and enhancements designed to meet the increasing demand for high quality mental health and substance use care. The Behavioral Health System Modernization Act will:

- Increase comprehensive community-based treatment by expanding Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs).
- Improve health outcomes and treatment quality by expanding the delivery of individualized, data-driven measurement-based care in behavioral health care settings, and by enhancing care coordination in primary care settings.
- Strengthen the behavioral health workforce by expanding resources and support for peer support networks and certified peer recovery specialists.
- Improve care for children and youth with behavioral health needs by increasing the availability of home- and community-based wraparound services.
- Reduce reliance on law enforcement and emergency departments by enhancing Maryland's network of crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams, and crisis stabilization facilities.

The demand for mental health and substance use care has never been higher. These system enhancements are needed now more than ever.

We strongly urge you to support this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helga Luest". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helga Luest
Chair, Mental Health Advisory Committee