



January 26, 2021

**Senate Finance Committee**  
**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*SB 96 -Public Health - Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities - Safety and Community Relations Plans*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 77,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

**BHSB supports SB 96 Public Health - Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities - Safety and Community Relations Plans.** This bill requires that the Behavioral Health Administration must adopt regulations to require a behavioral health program to establish and implement a safety plan for the safety of individuals served by the behavioral health program as part of the requirements for licensure.

The State of Maryland a few years ago adopted [COMAR 10.63](#) which outlines the licensing and accreditation requirements for community based behavioral health programs. All providers are required to be accredited from a national accreditation organization in order to be licensed in the State of Maryland. Certain accreditation organizations require behavioral health programs to have community relations plans in order to receive accreditation. Requiring behavioral health organizations to file these plans with the Behavioral Health Administration is appropriate.

SB 96 aligns with current national accreditation standards for community-based behavioral health programs and will ensure that community relations plans are made available to the State. **As such, BHSB urges the Senate Finance Committee to support SB 96.**