



BALTIMORE CITY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DIRECTORATE

OFFICERS

Joan Sperlein
President
IBR REACH Health
Services

Vacant
Vice President

Adrienne Britton
Secretary
Comprehensive Care
Group

Toni Maynard-Carter
Treasurer
Johns Hopkins Hospital
Broadway Center

Vickie Walters
Immediate Past President
IBR REACH Health
Services

February 22, 2021

Testimony on SB 638 **Maryland Insurance Commissioner – Specialty Mental Health Services** **and Payment of Claims - Enforcement**

Senate Finance Committee

February 24, 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Baltimore City Substance Abuse Director (BSCAD) is an advocacy and provider organization comprised of 30 Baltimore City substance use disorders treatment providers representing all levels of care from prevention to residential treatment. Our mission is the promotion of high-quality, best-practice and effective substance use disorders treatment for the citizens of Baltimore City. We are also involved in and support legislation that ensures our citizens get the best possible care through active consideration of legislation as it relates to the health and well-being of our consumer population.

In July 2019, Optum Maryland, as the lowest bidder, was awarded Maryland's Administrative Service Organization (ASO) contract for the state's public behavioral health system. The system failed immediately when operations commenced in January 2020. Fundamental systems problems continue to the present with no end in sight. Substance Use Disorder providers across Baltimore City have been put under tremendous strain, spending countless unreimbursed hours of staff time to reconcile old claims, review reams of data, attempt to communicate with the ASO, and suffer from cash flow crises. At this point there is no expectation that the problems will ever be resolved by pursuing the current path.

Ultimately it is the citizens of Baltimore City with mental and substance use challenges who suffer the consequences of the failure to enforce the ASO contract. Passage of SB 638 is an action this committee and the General Assembly can take to hold Optum accountable to our providers and the individuals they serve.

As such, the BCSAD urges a favorable report on SB 638.

Joan Sperlein, LCPC, CAC-AD
President, BCSAD

c/o REACH Health Services
2104 Maryland Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
(410) 752-6080