

**House Bill 935 Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion  
(Behavioral Health System Modernization Act)**

Health and Government Operations Committee

March 9, 2022

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

My name is Jillian Szczepaniak-Gillece and I currently am the Director of Behavioral Health Services at The Children's Guild. The Children's Guild has been around since 1957 and constantly seeks to refine and improve care that is provided to Children, Families and Communities through education, mental health and job skills. We believe greatly in providing care for all those need it and are fierce advocates for walking the journey with those we serve.

The need for quality mental health and substance use care has never been higher.

HB 935 can help. This bill includes a variety of reforms and enhancements designed to meet the increasing demand for high quality mental health and substance use care. It will increase comprehensive community-based treatment by expanding Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, improve health outcomes and treatment quality by increasing the use of measurement-based care in behavioral health and primary care settings, strengthen the behavioral health workforce by expanding resources for peers support networks and peer recovery specialists, improve care for children and youth by increasing the availability of home- and community-based wraparound services, and reduce reliance on law enforcement and emergency departments by ensuring stable reimbursement for crisis response services.

The necessity of offering compensation for the high quality work that mental health workers provide is crucial. While most clinicians understand the importance of collaboration, measurement based care and offering wrap around resources, they are not given the funding to ensure that these are at the forefront of the work all the time. I know countless therapists, social workers, Primary Care Physicians, psychiatrists and in home workers who want to spend more time ensuring that wrap around services are being instituted and that care is being measured; however, the lack of reimbursement prevents them from instituting life saving standards. Requiring the funding for Collaborative Care Model will streamline resources and ensure that the team is on the same page in providing treatment.

Offering funding that will sustain wrap around care will empower clients to thrive and grow. Those who are experiencing mental health struggles need support outside of only the therapy session. Providing an option of funding for case management and targeted interventions will allow for a clients to receive additional and necessary care to address needs. Often mental health providers are working on case management aspects of a client's case with limited time and resources as they are not reimbursed for the collaboration and non-face to face time. Moreover, they are not given the incentive to focus on measurement based care as it is not financially sustainable. By utilizing Measurement-based care and Evidence-based practices, clinicians are accountable to the work that is being done and able to assess how to best intervene for a client's need. These measurements allow for a clear baseline and to assess the

interventions and client's successes. At The Children's Guild, we are already using on-going measurements such as : The Columbia Suicide Scale, Vanderbilt (ADHD), SCARED (Anxiety), Pediatric Symptoms CheckList, and Therapeutic Alliance (TASC).

The demand for behavioral health care is at an all-time high. The enhancements in this bill are needed now more than ever. **The Children's Guild urges this committee to pass HB 935**