



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 14th, 2023

SB 362

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics – Established

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 362 will increase access to comprehensive community based mental health and substance use care by expanding Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs).

CCBHCS are federally designated, proven models that provide a comprehensive range of outpatient mental health and substance use treatment, care coordination with other providers and services, and connection to other systems and supports. They are based on the federally qualified health center (FQHC) model, providing services regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

CCBHCs must provide nine core services, including services for children and youth, 24/7 crisis intervention, peer supports, substance use treatment, and primary health screening and monitoring. States that have implemented the model broadly have seen increased access to care, reductions in emergency department and inpatient utilization, a mitigation of behavioral health workforce challenges, higher engagement post discharge from hospitals, improved utilization of medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorders, and improved integration with physical care.

Those experiencing adverse behavioral health issues are among the most marginalized and underserved in our society. The Catholic Church through its parishes, charities and other ministries reaches out pastorally to those struggling with mental illness. Because the Catholic faith embraces an integrated view of the human person as both corporeal and spiritual, we welcome the sciences as one pathway to knowledge of the human person. Pope St. John Paul II

said "Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for Senate Bill 362.