



Senate Bill 362 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics – Established

Senate Finance Committee

February 14, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

The Children's Guild is a nonprofit organization providing clinical and educational services to children and families in the Greater Baltimore and Washington region. We are among the most experienced child-serving organizations. Each year, the agency's continuum of care and hundreds of professional staff help thousands of youth, young adults, and their families excel and succeed. We operate public charter and contract schools; special education schools; schools for autism; preschool; outpatient mental health services in public schools and at our center; treatment foster care; apprenticeships, and pre-career programs.

I am writing to express that The Children's Guild strongly supports the passing of SB 362. This legislation will increase access to comprehensive community-based mental health and substance use care by expanding Maryland's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) network.

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.

As the Chief People Officer, I oversee the mental health services provided within The Children's Guild. Therefore I have seen the devastating consequences of not having coordinated mental health care available to children and their families throughout the state. Providing the framework and funding to serve the whole child in collaboration is the solution for helping to end our current mental health crisis.

This bill will improve behavioral health outcomes, save money, and keep people out of crisis.

For these reasons, The Children's Guild, urges this committee to pass SB 362.

Thank you,



Elizabeth W. Garcia, MSSA, MNO, LCSW-C
Chief People Officer
The Children's Guild