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Senate Bill 362 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics – Established
Senate Finance Committee
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

My name is Celia Serkin. I am Executive Director of the Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Inc., a family support organization providing family peer services, family navigation, group support, education, advocacy, and recovery coaching to help parents and other primary caregivers who have children, youth, and/or young adults with behavioral health challenges (mental health, substance use or co-occurring disorders). We serve families from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, social-economic, and religious backgrounds. The organization is run by parents who have raised children with behavioral health challenges. I have two children, now adults, who have behavioral health challenges.

The Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Inc., is pleased to support Senate Bill 362 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics – Established. This bill requires, on or before December 1, 2023, the Maryland Department of Health to submit a State plan amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to establish certified community behavioral health clinics; requiring, if the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approves the amendment, the Department to amend the State plan to cover certain services; and requiring the Department to establish certain payment systems.

SB 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.

Maryland Families who have children and/or youth with mental health, substance use, or co-occurring disorders from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, social-economic, and religious backgrounds need access to CCHBCs. There is a severe youth mental health crisis in Maryland. Youth suicides and overdoses have increased. There is an increasing number of youth emergency room visits for mental health. Many young people have spent weeks or months living in emergency departments and other areas of hospitals. Families face long wait lists for specific behavioral health services and are unable to access others. There are barriers stemming from discriminatory

insurance coverage for those with mental health and substance use disorders. Racial and ethnic minority groups have experienced disparities in mental health and substance use related to access to care, psychosocial stress, and social determinants of health.

Families deserve high-quality healthcare, regardless of their situation, including the ability to pay. CCBHCs are an important path forward to provide better access to care for the most vulnerable in our communities. CCBHCs provide a seamless, high-quality whole-person care for individuals with mild/moderate and moderate/severe behavioral health needs. They are required to serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age - including developmentally appropriate care for children and youth. CCBHCs help people improve their health by making it easier to get into treatment. They keep people from going into the hospital when they do not need hospital care. The CCBHC model requires crisis services that are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They also must provide care coordination, the linchpin of CCBHCs, to help people navigate behavioral health care, physical health care, social services, and the other systems they are involved.

This bill will improve behavioral health outcomes, save money, and keep people out of crisis. **For these reasons, the Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Inc. urges this committee to pass SB 362.**