



February 22, 2024

**House Ways & Means Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB 1007 - Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2024

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

BHSB supports HB 1007 - Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2024 as a well-designed initiative to bring in new revenues from progressive sources. Maryland faces a structural budget deficit and numerous demands for new funding allocations. More revenue will be needed to meet Maryland’s obligations and the Fair Share for Maryland Act is a strong proposal to fund these needs.

BHSB has seen the demand for mental health services increase significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. This increased need for services is most pronounced among youth and school-aged children, but it is seen across age groups. The state needs additional mental health professionals now more than ever, exacerbating an already significant workforce shortage. This shortage has caused salaries to increase far more than inflation and led to critical positions remaining unfilled for months. Community mental health centers are struggling to meet these increased costs and need support from the state to address our communities’ mental health needs.

The state will need new resources to incentivize individuals to enter the mental health profession and to stay to work in Maryland. The state can use different strategies, from targeted incentivizes to increased rates, but virtually all will require new funding. Addressing this priority, along with the all the other demands in the education, transportation, and other sectors, will be impossible without new revenues.

The Fair Share for Maryland Act is a reasonable proposal to bring in new resources. This bill is crafted to make Maryland’s tax system fairer for middle- and working-class families and small businesses by closing corporate loopholes and raising taxes on millionaires and the top 1% of earners. The provisions of HB 1007 will bring in \$1.6 billion in new revenues annually to address behavioral health and other critical state priorities.

BHSB urges the House Ways & Means Committee to support HB 1007 to fund our state’s critical health and human service needs.

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142