

2022 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session Summary

The Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session ended on April 11, 2022, and passed a number of bills that advance **BHSB's policy priorities**, including efforts to support a stable behavioral health workforce and increased funding for behavioral health crisis services. Combined these legislative wins will improve the behavioral health and wellbeing of residents in Baltimore and the state.

Build a Stable Behavioral Health Workforce

- **Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals**

(HB 97 PASSED)

This legislation establishes the Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals. The workgroup is charged with making recommendations to increase the number of underrepresented students who study to be behavioral health professionals and increase the number of underrepresented behavioral health professionals practicing in Maryland. A report is due to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly by July 1, 2023.

- **Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland – Establishment** *(HB 625/SB 440 PASSED)*

This legislation establishes the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland. Various state agencies are represented including the Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health. The Commission is charged with determining the extent of the health care workforce challenges in the state and as well as determining potential solutions. By December 31, 2022, and December 31, 2023, the commission must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

Strengthen Crisis Response Services

- **Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—988 Trust Fund**

(HB 293/SB 241 PASSED)

Starting in July of 2022, 988 will become the new national Suicide Crisis Lifeline. States across the country have been preparing for this shift and considering how they can use this opportunity to strengthen their behavioral health crisis response systems. This legislation will help Maryland implement 988 by establishing it as Maryland's behavioral health crisis hotline and creating the Maryland 988 Trust Fund. The bill allocates \$5.5 million to the Trust Fund for FY2024 to provide funding for local 988 crisis call centers and other related crisis services. This bill was the top priority of the [Fund MD988 Campaign](#) that BHSB helped to launch this year.



- **Gap analysis of Maryland’s behavioral health crisis response services continuum** (*SB 290 see pg. 118-120 for adopted budget language*)
The FY 2023 budget included language directing the Maryland Health Care Commission to work with an independent third party to conduct a needs assessment and gaps analysis of the continuum of Maryland behavioral health crisis response services. The analysis will provide a comprehensive estimate of what services are needed to provide timely and dependable access across the state. An interim report is due December 1, 2022, and a final report is due June 30, 2023.
- **Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services and Public Safety Answering Points – Modifications** (*HB 129/SB 12 PASSED*)
This bill makes two changes that will help reduce over-reliance on law enforcement to manage behavioral health crises. First, applicants for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program will now be required to include how their proposal will help to prioritize mobile crisis response over law enforcement responses to behavioral health crises. Second, all local 911 answering points will need public, written policies on how they will triage mental health calls and how they decide what resources to dispatch.

Invest in Behavioral Health and Support Services for Youth

- **Report on behavioral health programs to prevent and divert youth from justice system involvement** (*SB 290, see pg. 303-304 for adopted budget language*)
The legislature adopted budget language in the FY 2023 budget requiring a report by the Department of Juvenile Services and the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration (MDH-BHA) that examines the role of youth co-designed behavioral health intervention and preventative programs as a model to reduce and prevent juvenile justice system involvement. The report is due November 1, 2022.
- **Maryland Medical Assistance Program—Substance Abuse Treatment—Network Adequacy** (*HB 971 PASSED*)
This legislation requires the MDH-BHA ensure there is an adequate network of providers available to provide substance use disorder services for children and youth. In addition, the Governor included a \$500,000 supplemental appropriation in the state’s FY 2023 to support the provisions of this bill.
- **HB 513 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Program** (*HB 513 PASSED*)
This bill establishes the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services Program within the Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Early Childhood. The program is intended to promote positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children.

Promote Harm Reduction Strategies

- **Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization**

(HB 481/SB 509 FAILED)

This legislation sought to decriminalize the use of drug paraphernalia, such as syringes, spoons, or pipes, intended for administration of an illicit substance. This would have effectively eliminated the risk of arrest or prosecution that syringe service program staff and participants sometimes face when in possession of syringes.

- **Criminal Procedure - Medical Emergency – Immunity** *(HB 190 FAILED)*

This legislation sought to improve the existing “Good Samaritan” law enacted in 2015 by clarifying that the person experiencing the overdose is provided the same immunity from arrest, charge and prosecution as the person calling for help. It also sought to expand the offenses that people are immune from.

FY23 Funding Commitments for Behavioral Health

The FY2023 Budget made investments across the board thanks to significant federal aid included in the various COVID-19 relief packages and a stronger than expected economic recovery. The state had a \$6 billion dollar surplus and this was used for both tax relief and program funding. Significant funding commitments were made for behavioral health:

- A 7.25% reimbursement rate increase for community-based behavioral health services
- Relief for Administrative Service Organization overpayments of less than \$25,000
- \$35 million to support mental health crisis stabilization, including 23-hour crisis beds for outpatient mental health clinics and step-down beds from inpatient psychiatric units
- \$5 million to support local crisis call centers in preparing for the launch of the new 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in July 2022
- \$2 million to support crisis services funded through the Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System (GBRCS) Partnership
- \$50 million to support community behavioral health services for students and families through the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports

The budget also includes language requiring the Maryland Department of Health and other state agencies to complete various reports and take other actions related to behavioral health including:

- Behavioral Health Administration report on prevalence and barriers to accessing medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for individuals with substance use disorders due October 1, 2022

- Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services report on mental health and substance use treatment for incarcerated individuals due August 20, 2022
- Department of Human Services report on hospital stays by youth in out-of-home placements due December 1, 2022
- Report from the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services detailing annual expenditures on programs to improve child well-being and address priorities established by the Children’s Cabinet due September 1, 2022