



ADVOCACY ALERT



Almost to the Finish Line!

Legislative Session Mid-Point



We have passed the mid-point of Maryland's 90-day legislative session and likely accomplishments of this year's session are coming into focus. The last day of the legislative session is Monday, April 11. This year has had a significant focus on the behavioral health needs of Maryland communities impacted by two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, and BHSB has been active in supporting efforts to address those needs and advancing our [2022 Policy Priorities](#). Below are some of the measures that are moving through the legislature.

Build a Stable Behavioral Health Workforce

HB 97 Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals

To plan for how to address the behavioral health workforce shortage, the House passed legislation that 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.

SB 290/ HB 300 Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2023)

The state's FY 2023 Budget includes a 3.25% reimbursement rate increase for community-based behavioral health services. In addition to what is mandated to be budgeted for FY 2023, the Governor's supplemental budget proposes to use a portion of the state's budget surplus to support an additional 4% reimbursement rate increases for behavioral health services for the coming fiscal year, hopefully helping to address the workforce challenges providers are experiencing due to the COVID pandemic.

Strengthen Crisis Response Services



SB 241/HB 293 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—988 Trust Fund

To support the July launch of the new National 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, the General Assembly is moving legislation that would establish a 988 Trust Fund to invest in 24/7 crisis call centers and other crisis response services across

Maryland. These bills, which passed both chambers, would dedicate an initial \$5.5 million in the trust fund starting in FY 2024 to support local 988/crisis call centers. The state's FY 2023 Budget also includes \$5 million in funding to support crisis call centers. Advocacy for 988 and strengthened crisis response services are supported by the **Fund MD988 Campaign**, a group of over 60 stakeholders advocating for investments in crisis services.

Invest in Behavioral Health and Support Services for Youth



The House and Senate budget committees are interested in better understanding the role of youth co-designed behavioral health intervention and preventative programs as a model to reduce and prevent juvenile justice system involvement. They proposed budget language to require the Department of Juvenile Services and the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration (MDH-BHA) to submit a report that shall include a review of current practices throughout the state, other models being implemented nationwide and recommendations for implementation (**SB 290**, see pg. 303-304 for adopted budget language).

HB 971 Maryland Medical Assistance Program—Substance Abuse Treatment—Network Adequacy

The House has passed legislation that 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, it is expected that the Governor will include a \$500,000 supplemental appropriation in the state's FY 2023 to support the provisions of this bill.

Promote Harm Reduction Strategies

[SB 509/HB 481](#) *Drug Paraphernalia for Administration—Decriminalization*

This legislation eliminates the risk of arrest or prosecution that syringe service program staff and participants sometimes face when in possession of syringes, effectively decriminalizing the use of drug paraphernalia. The House passed this bill; however, we still need advocacy to get it through the Senate. To contact your State Senator and urge their support [click here](#).

A National Strategy for Mental Health and Wellness

In his first State of the Union Address, President Biden highlighted a National Mental Health Strategy within his Unity Agenda and is proposing billions in funding in his annual budget. Read the Fact Sheet for more information on the strategy.

FACT SHEET

Behavioral Health System Baltimore is the area's leading expert and resource in advancing behavioral health and wellness. We help guide innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for those who are dealing with mental health and substance use disorders to help build healthier individuals, stronger families and safer communities.

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