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# Howard County

## *Internal Memorandum*

**Subject:** Testimony on Council Bill No. 13-2018, a Bill establishing a Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board

**To:** Mary Kay Sigaty,  
Council Chairperson

**From:** Carl DeLorenzo,  
Director of Policy and Programs

**Date:** March 5, 2018

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### **Summary**

Council Bill 13-2018 (CB13) supports approval of a new Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board and the removal of the Mental Health Authority from County Code. CB13 accompanies the merger of the Mental Health Authority and the Howard County Health Department and the integration of mental health and substance use disorder services in Howard County, which will take effect July 1, 2018. Below is a detailed timeline of the integration process that County Administration followed. This memo also serves as the Administration's formal testimony for the March 19 public hearing on the legislation.

### **Background**

State law requires that every jurisdiction in Maryland have a Core Service Agency (CSA) to manage the publicly funded mental health system and a Local Addictions Authority (LAA) to manage substance use disorder services. Both CSAs and LAAs can be agents of the local health department. Howard County contains a unique provision in State law that also allows the CSA to be a quasi-public authority, which led to the creation of the Mental Health Authority in the mid-1990s. Howard County's LAA has always resided in the Howard County Health Department (HCHD).

The Maryland General Assembly's 2013 Joint Chairman's Report (JCR) required the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) "to develop a system of integrated care for



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individuals with co-occurring serious mental illness and substance abuse issues.” DHMH responded by reorganizing the state’s Mental Hygiene Administration and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration.

DHMH’s reorganization paved the way for changes to behavioral health service delivery models in local jurisdictions. The operational merger streamlined eligibility, reimbursement, and care coordination, which made it more efficient for the State to engage with a single entity at the local level. The merger also led LAAs and CSAs to share other common responsibilities including the provision of clinical information and service referrals. In FY18, the Department of Legislative Services’ (DLS) budget analysis for DHMH requested the department “study the issue of combining LAAs and CSAs into integrated Behavioral Health Authorities...”. DHMH submitted this report to the General Assembly in November 2017.

### **Integration in Howard County**

County Administration began developing a plan for integration in 2017 following the DLS budget language, the State’s decision to end funding to LAAs for direct service delivery, and an increasing rate of co-occurring mental health and substance use diagnoses for clients. Co-occurrence rates vary demographically but are roughly between 10 and 50 percent based on federal data, and mental health treatment costs for the publicly insured in Maryland are highest for the dually diagnosed. With the Howard County LAA’s exit from providing direct services, the LAA and CSA effectively did similar work for a similar population. Also, MHA physically moved into HCHD’s Ascend One location in Summer 2015 to more closely coordinate activities.

The County’s integration plan included forming a workgroup containing representatives from MHA and HCHD, community partners who serve and advocate for individuals with behavioral health needs, and a member of the County Council. Members of the public in attendance were offered time to provide comments in two of the meetings. The workgroup met for three months and analyzed integration at the state and local levels, best practices in behavioral health, and MHA’s and HCHD’s current infrastructure. These discussions and the resources provided to facilitate them led the workgroup to recommend a merger of MHA into HCHD, and the



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formation of a Local Behavioral Health Administration within HCHD. Workgroup members who did not support a merger within HCHD urged the County to prioritize consumer input and ensure that mental health remains a high priority.

The Administration accepted the workgroup's recommendation and began meeting with members of MHA and HCHD to prepare for functional integration on July 1, 2018. The work has involved addressing matters related to budgets, personnel, grants management, and state compliance. The work is largely completed and the Administration does not see any impediment to reaching its goal of full integration by July 1, 2018. It is important to note that functional integration does not require action by the County Council because neither MHA or HCHD are county agencies.

However, both the CSA and LAA have separate county boards comprised of members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council; the Mental Health Authority Board (MHAB) is a fiduciary board, and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Board (ADAAB) is an advisory board. Merging of the CSA and LAA also necessitates a merger of the two boards. The Administration formed a subcommittee of individuals from MHAB and ADAAB to determine membership and duties of a new Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board that would advise the Health Officer and County Executive on behavioral health programs and services for Howard County residents.

### **CB13**

Following the completion of all appropriate steps to functionally integrate MHA into HCHD by July 1, 2018, the Administration prepared legislation to amend all accompanying changes in County Code to finalize the integration process, including:

- Rename and recodify ADAAB to be the Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board;
- Add behavioral health expertise to the Board of Health; and,
- Remove references to MHA in the County Code since the organization will be dissolved on July 1, 2018.



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### **Fiscal Impact**

As of this writing, MHA has five employees. Four of these employees are applying for and expected to be placed in newly created State positions in HCHD. In the instances where State salaries are less than MHA salaries, the County has agreed to supplement salaries up to the FY18 salary amount to hold the employees harmless. Only existing employees are eligible for the salary supplement. At the time of the employees' separation from state government, the county supplement goes away. County Administration estimates the salary supplements for the four employees will total approximately between \$36,000 and \$47,000 in FY19. This amount is dependent on the job classification approved for each position by the State.

There is a fifth employee who will become an employee of the Howard County Police Department in FY19. This position is partially county-funded and partially state-funded. The funding split will remain unchanged in FY19.

The fiscal impact pertains to the functional integration of MHA into HCHD and not to CB13.

Cc: Calvin Ball, Councilperson  
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