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**Bill No:** CB 13-2018  
**Title:** Behavioral Health Integration  
**Position:** SUPPORT

The Horizon Foundation is dedicated to improving health and wellness in Howard County, and offers its full support of CB 13-2018. The County Executive's bill will pave the way to fully integrate behavioral health services into the Howard County Health Department. Integration of mental health and substance abuse services under one agency will likely result in improved service coordination, more comprehensive health planning, better efficiency, and healthier residents.

Behavioral health integration has been a long-time community aspiration and the Foundation has been a part of community discussions regarding the topic since the beginning. Local discussions about behavioral health service integration began at least five years ago as the State reconsidered its statewide service delivery model. At that time, the Mental Health Authority (MHA) convened experts from the field together with community leaders to discuss the benefits of integration and how it might best occur locally. As discussions continued, MHA and the Health Department chose to co-locate at the Stanford Blvd offices so that that substance abuse and mental health staff could benefit from each other's proximity. And in 2017, County Executive Kittleman convened a work group to make final recommendations on how to proceed. Foundation staff were invited to participate in these meetings and thought that the work group discussions were well-executed, civil, frank, and fair. The work group concluded that it was in the best interest of Howard County residents for the Health Department and MHA to merge.

We acknowledge that full integration will not be an easy process and that community advocates want to make sure that behavioral health priorities and service concerns are not buried within the county bureaucracy. Enacting CB 13 will create a new Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board and expand the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Health. Together, the Boards will act as "watchdogs" to ensure that behavioral health services continue to be delivered in the best way possible to the residents you serve and that we can plan for services and supports needed in the future.

Given that mental illness and substance abuse disorders frequently co-occur, planning, service coordination, and contracting of services should be integrated so that Howard County residents receive the best care they need to live a healthy life. Doing so under the health department makes the most sense. The Foundation urges you to pass the County Executive's bill, CB 13-2018. It makes good sense and will result in a healthier Howard County.

## **Testimony In Support of Council Bill No. 13-2018**

*by*

*Scott Rose, Executive Director, Way Station, Inc.*

*March 19, 2018*

I am pleased to testify in support of Council Bill No. 13-2018. Way Station, a part of the Sheppard Pratt Health System, provides a comprehensive array of mental health services in Howard County to almost 2,000 citizens, including an outpatient mental health clinic, day psychosocial rehabilitation program, scattered-site supported housing, and mobile treatment.

We support the bill because we believe that it is in the best interests of Howard County citizens that the Mental Health Authority be merged into the Health Department for the following reasons:

1. The Maryland Behavioral Health Administration which funds mental health and addiction recovery services for low-income individuals has indicated that local LAAs and CSAs must be integrated administratively as well as clinically. This is consistent with the positive movement in the behavioral health field toward integration at local, state and federal levels across the country.
2. In Howard County, the Health Department is positioned well to absorb the functions of the Mental Health Authority because of the Health Department's strong administrative leadership, clinical expertise in the treatment of both mental illness and substance use disorders, experience with providing and monitoring healthcare in both publicly and privately funded systems, and unique skill in population health management.

As a related point, I served on the workgroup that analyzed the various options and that made the recommendation to merge the Mental Health Authority into the Health Department. This study was one of the most truly objective and comprehensive government-led stakeholder input processes that I have witnessed in my 30 years in nonprofit senior management. As such, I am very confident in the wisdom of the workgroup's recommendation which I supported then and still support now.

Office of the Vice President of  
Population Health and Advancement  
5755 Cedar Lane  
Columbia, MD 21044



HOWARD COUNTY  
GENERAL HOSPITAL  
JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE

Council Chair Sigaty and Members of the Howard County Council  
George Howard Building  
3430 Court House Drive  
Ellicott City, MD 21043

**CB 13 -- Support**

March 19, 2018

Dear Council Chairperson Sigaty and members of the Howard County Council:

Howard County General Hospital, a non-profit organization on the front lines of addiction and behavioral health treatment in Howard County, offers its full support of CB 13. The legislation would provide an effective means of integrating oversight and policy regarding mental health and substance-abuse issues.

The proposed merger of activities and operations of the Mental Health Authority into the Howard County Health Department would create a single point of contact for providers, agencies and non-profits such as Howard County General Hospital (HCGH), when developing programs for this client population.

HCGH enjoys a close and effective working relationship with the Health Department. The two organizations have worked together to link peer recovery support specialists to patients in our hospital who want to begin substance use disorder treatment, on training county and hospital employees and members of the general public to administer life-saving naloxone, and on other issues.

The Health Department knows very well the challenges faced by the hospital in providing behavioral health services. Our adult and pediatric Emergency Department beds are often filled with behavioral health patients requiring inpatient treatment. They wait for days, sometimes weeks, for proper placement. The issues faced by this patient population are complex, and we concur with the need to streamline the work being done on best practices and practical solutions.

A new Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board, advising the County Health Officer and the County Executive, would provide a much-needed sharpened focus for this effort. As you know, state law

requires that this consolidation be undertaken. We commend Howard County for the thoughtful and reasonable approach to implementing these requirements.

We believe the changes proposed in CB13 will benefit the citizens of Howard County and Howard County General Hospital urges the adopt CB13.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'EK', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Elizabeth Edsall Kromm, PhD, MSc  
Vice President, Population Health and Advancement

To: Members of the Howard County Council  
From: Matt Reber, Member, Howard County Board of Health  
Date: March 19, 2018  
Subject: Support CB-13

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to support this legislation on behalf of The Howard County Board of Health. The Board of Health supports the integration of the Core Service Agency (Mental Health Authority) and the Local Addiction Authority (LAA or HCHD Bureau of Behavioral Health). The creation of a Local Behavioral Health Authority unifies the administration of the publicly funded mental health and substance use treatment services system in Howard County.

A Board of Health member, Dr. Sue Song, participated on the Behavioral Health workgroup which explored options for integration and voted to merge the Mental Health Authority into the Howard County Health Department. As an outcome of the integration process, it was recommended that the Board of Health membership be amended to include representation of those served by the mental health and substance use treatment community. This legislation adds 2 members to the BOH:

- At Least one member with professional experience in mental health
- At Least one member with professional experience in substance use disorders

Mental health and substance use issues are a growing concern among Howard County Residents. The addition of these two members will infuse needed knowledge and advisory capacity to the Board of Health and ensure community members with behavioral health issues have a voice.

The Board of Health also supports the creation of a Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board by merging the advisory responsibilities of the current Mental Health Authority Board and the Alcohol Drug Abuse Advisory Board. The Behavioral Health Advisory Board will advise the Health Officer and County Executive in regard to planning, managing, and monitoring of behavioral health programs for Howard County residents.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to support this measure on behalf of the Board of Health. We are looking forward to July when the integration is complete and the opportunities it will allow to better serve our community.

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Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

**To:** Members of the Howard County Council  
**From:** Antigone R. Vickery, Deputy Health Officer  
**Date:** March 19, 2018  
**Subject:** **CB13-2018, Behavioral Health Services**

Howard County Health Department (HCHD) fully supports **CB13, Behavioral Health Services** which supports the creation of a new Local Behavioral Health Authority and removes the Mental Health Authority from County Code. This accompanies the integration of the Howard County Mental Health Authority (the County's designated Core Service Agency) into the HCHD's Bureau of Behavioral Health (the County's designated Local Addictions Authority), to create the Local Behavioral Health Authority. The result of this integration will unify the administration of publicly funded mental health and substance use treatment services in Howard County, as well as coordinate other related services for all residents under one unit.

The integration of mental health and substance use disorders under a coordinated Behavioral Health framework has been an ongoing process for several years, occurring at the State level and at agencies in local jurisdictions across the state. Howard County's activities are in full alignment with State guidance.

In Howard County, this legislation and integration supports, strengthens and advances the recommendations made in the County's 2014 *Behavioral Health Taskforce Final Report*. Efforts toward integration were further advanced in the summer of 2015 when the Mental Health Authority physically moved into the same space as the Health Department. Then finally, in the spring of 2017 a workgroup was formed with a cross section of key stakeholders who held public meetings and examined organizational integration. This concluded in a final public vote to proceed with integration. All in all, a very inclusive and transparent process. The outcome of this will be a unified and coordinated Behavioral Health unit that can better serve all Howard County residents grappling with mental health and or substance use disorders. The organizational integration will be seamless due to the groundwork established in the previous years.

Howard County Health Department is prepared. We have been working with MHA staff (and Board members) since the fall 2017 to review programs and funding, culminating in a combined FY19 funding proposal submitted to the State in February. Starting in July, grant management and delivery of program services will be streamlined. We can also ensure connection to additional programs within the HCHD that may be beneficial. All of this will result in better service to our residents.

To strengthen integration, this legislation recommends that the Board of Health (BOH) membership be amended by adding two additional members: one member with professional mental health experience and one with professional experience in substance use disorder treatment. As mental health and substance use issues become a growing concern among Howard County residents, the addition of these two members will contribute knowledge and advisory capacity to the Board of Health and ensure community members with behavioral health issues have a voice.

The new Behavioral Health Advisory Board will advise the Health Officer and County Executive in regard to planning, managing, and monitoring of behavioral health programs for Howard County residents and work to strengthen the larger Behavioral Health System for all Howard County residents.