

HEARING NOTES

Resolution: 21-0044R

Informational Hearing - COVID-19 and Mental Health

Committee: Health, Environment, and Technology

Chaired by: Danielle McCray

Hearing Date: May 19, 2021

Time (Beginning): 5:00 PM

Time (Ending): 6:25 PM

Location: Webex Virtual Hearing

Total Attendance: Approximately 40 people

Committee Members in Attendance:

Danielle McCray John Bullock Mark Conway
Phylicia Porter James Torrence Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer

- Bill Synopsis in the file? YES NO N/A
- Attendance sheet in the file? YES NO N/A
- Agency reports read? YES NO N/A
- Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded?..... YES NO N/A
- Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?..... YES NO N/A
- Evidence of notification to property owners? YES NO N/A
- Final vote taken at this hearing? YES NO N/A
- Motioned by: Conway
- Seconded by:..... Torrence
- Final Vote: Favorable

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Department of Health
- D’Paul Nibber, Department of Health
- Adrienne Breidenstine, Behavioral Health System Baltimore
- Kisha Winston-Watkins, Behavioral Health System Baltimore
- Tisha Edwards, Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services/Mayor’s Office of Children and Family Success
- Katie Yorick, Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services
- Lea Ferguson, Mayor’s Office of Children and Family Success

Major Issues Discussed

1. Chairwoman McCray discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health and the importance of ensuring that residents have access to treatment and support.
2. Dr. Dzirasa presented on the Health Department's efforts to address the mental health impacts of the pandemic (presentation in file).
3. Adrienne Breidenstine and Kisha Winston-Watkins presented on Behavioral Health System Baltimore's (BHSB) services and response to the pandemic (presentation in file).
4. Katie Yorick presented on the pandemic's mental health impacts on individuals experiencing homelessness and the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services' (MOHS) efforts to address those impacts.
5. Lea Ferguson discussed the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success' (MOCFS) response to the mental health impacts of the pandemic.
6. Tevis Simon discussed her experience as person with mental health diagnoses and as a mental health service provider during the pandemic.
7. Councilmembers asked the following questions:
 - a. What financial assistance or low cost mental health services are available for those who lost their health coverage during the pandemic? The Here2help hotline can connect them to services and they may be eligible for Medicaid.
 - b. Does the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services work with providers to connect people experiencing homelessness to tele-health resources? Yes, the Office works with partners through shelters.
 - c. How does the City help populations without access to technology connect with services? The Health Department staff are out in the field to connect older populations to service. The Department will follow up with additional information.
 - d. Does the City offer any online mental health assessments with provider follow-up? Currently BHSB offers assessments and referrals by phone, but is not aware of an online tool.
 - e. What mental health services will be incorporated into schools when they reopen? The school system is developing its own plans with some financial assistance coming from the federal and state governments. MOCFS has had some discussions with the school system and will send additional information on its plans.
 - f. What populations are most vulnerable and in need of mental health services? Older adults are particularly at risk and may have difficulty connecting to services through technology.
8. The Committee voted to recommend the resolution favorably.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes No


If yes, describe.

1. The Health Department will follow up with additional information on its work to help populations without access to technology connect with services.

2. MOCFS will send additional information on the school system’s plans to provide / expand mental health services when schools reopen.

Committee Vote:

D. McCray: Yea
J. Bullock: Yea
M. Conway: Yea
R. Dorsey: Absent
P. Porter: Yea
J. Torrence: Yea
I. Schleifer: Yea



Matthew L. Peters, Committee Staff

Date: May 21, 2021

Cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File