



September 28, 2016

The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 409, City Hall
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: City Council Bill No. 15-0254R- Implementing Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion in Baltimore

Dear President and City Council Members:

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports City Council Bill 15-0254R. This bill supports the expansion of the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program nationwide and requests that law enforcement and other stakeholders appear before the City Council to discuss how the LEAD program could be implemented in Baltimore.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization responsible for managing Baltimore City's public behavioral health system—the system of care that provides behavioral health and wellness services for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. Baltimore City's network of community-based providers deliver a range of services, including prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery services, to over 65,000 people annually, who are Medicaid/Medicare recipients or uninsured.

LEAD is a voluntary pre-booking diversion program that allows officers to redirect low-level offenders engaged in drugs or prostitution activity to community-based behavioral health services, instead of jail and prosecution. LEAD participants are linked to trauma-informed intensive case management, delivered in a harm reduction framework. Case Managers work to connect participants with a wide range of support services, including substance use disorder treatment, health care, employment assistance, and housing. There are currently three cities that are implementing LEAD programs in the United States: Seattle, Santa Fe, and Albany.

BHSB serves as the principal agency responsible for managing the planning and implementation of the LEAD program in collaboration with a number of City agencies and community partners. As the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City, BHSB can ensure that the LEAD program is integrated into the larger public behavioral health system. LEAD partners include: Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, State's Attorney's Office, Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Office of the Public Defender, United Way of Central Maryland, the University of Maryland Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and other community partners. All stakeholders are represented on LEAD's Coordinating Group, which BHSB convenes.

Comments