



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

February 18, 2020

Senate Bill 441: Mental Health – Emergency Facilities List – Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senators Hayes, Augustine, Biedle, Jennings and Reilly, Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 441: Mental Health – Emergency Facilities List – Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers.

This legislation would provide that the list of emergency facilities the Maryland Department of Health is required to publish may include comprehensive crisis response centers, crisis stabilization centers, and crisis treatment centers; and generally relating to the list of emergency facilities published by the Maryland Department of Health.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland's landscape stretches from the Appalachian Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. Healthy People 2020 acknowledges some of the distinctive cultural, social, economic and geographic characteristics that define rural America and place rural populations at greater risk for a myriad of diseases and health disorders (Southwest Rural Health Research Center, <https://srhrc.tamhsc.edu/>).

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs notes that residents of rural Maryland are acutely aware of these disparities, but not always aware of programs aimed at creating solutions. This legislation would increase awareness of mental health resources available.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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