

ADDIE C. ECKARDT
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Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot,
and Wicomico Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

Health and Human Services
Subcommittee

Joint Committees

Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review

Audit

Children, Youth, and Families

Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight

Pensions



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Testimony for Senate Bill 541
Mental Health - Involuntary Admissions - Procedures
Finance Committee
February 18, 2020

Madam Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 541 - Mental Health - Involuntary Admissions - Procedures. This proposed legislation would allow psychiatric nurse practitioners to perform the initial examination of involuntary patients, as well as allow psychiatric nurse practitioners to testify at the subsequent hearing. The acute shortage of psychiatrists across the State and the Eastern Shore necessitates this bill.

Allowing psychiatric nurse practitioners to complete these duties will expedite treatment. Psychiatric nurse practitioners are already able to perform the same examinations of voluntary patients. Due to current laws, however, some involuntary patients are turned away and released because of the lack of psychiatrists.

Under this bill, examination of the involuntarily admitted individual is required within 24 hours, however a psychiatric nurse practitioner would be authorized to make this examination. The nurse practitioner may also testify at the involuntary admission administrative hearing within 10 days.

This legislation addresses the growing need for behavioral health services and the shortage of psychiatrists. For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report of Senate Bill 541. Thank you.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Addie Eckardt', written over a large, faint, circular watermark or signature.

Senator Addie Eckardt