
CMDS

CLINIC MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, INC.

DATE: Wednesday, March 11, 2020
BILL: Senate Bill 705 – Maryland Transit Administration – Disabled Reduced Fare Program – Opioid Treatment Program Patients
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chairwoman
POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

On behalf of Clinic Management and Development Services, Inc. (CMDS) we submit the following testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1440. Established in 2008, CMDS offers management and consulting services to individuals and groups who are passionate about serving the community through substance use disorder and mental health treatment.

Senate Bill 705 “requires the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to make monthly transit passes available to opioid treatment programs for use by patients of the programs who qualify for MTA’s Disabled Reduced Fare Program. The passes may be issued to patients on site at opioid treatment programs by staff. MTA must adopt regulations to establish the process by which participating opioid treatment programs may issue transit passes under the bill. In consultation with participating opioid treatment programs, MTA must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2021, and by each December 1 thereafter, on the status of the bill’s implementation. The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.”

Supporting patients in treatment benefits everyone and especially taxpayers. In areas such as Baltimore City with a high degree of concentrated poverty this bill gives a patient an incentive to continue treatment. Transportation has been identified as a barrier to treatment. This bill would be another tool in the treatment toolbox to help curb this opioid crisis that we are experiencing in Baltimore, and throughout our great state of Maryland.

The proposed legislation would establish a mechanism for providing MTA monthly bus passes to patients enrolled in OTPs who are in good standing with those programs. Current law entitles such patients to receive passes at the discounted rate of \$22.00 per month, yet there are important issues that make these provisions of little real effect. Patients must typically take the bus downtown each month to apply, pay for and receive the pass. Very few patients for whom OTPs do the required paperwork actually go to the MTA retail facility and receive their pass.

Often it is touch and go with continuing treatment and research shows that transportation time and cost is one impediment in the long road to recovery. If a patient misses one day due to lack of funds, he or she is very unlikely to return to treatment anytime soon. The bus pass convenience is not a small but quite significant step and a positive one as we need to do all we can to keep patients in programs.

To eliminate this crippling obstacle, we are asking for a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 705.