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February 11, 2020

Heather Bagnall
Legislative District 33
Anne Arundel County
Health and Government Operations Committee

Delegate Bagnall,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB332 Mental Health-Emergency Facilities-Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers. I am a 15 year professional fire fighter/paramedic in Anne Arundel County. While I do not speak for my organization, I would like to offer a perspective on the challenges faced by both those suffering from mental or behavioral crisis, and the emergency responders who serve them.

We are the last line of defense when crisis strikes our citizens. We often arrive in the dead of night to find a person in some sort of behavioral crisis, their family members distraught, sometimes weeping that they just can't help them anymore, and they don't know what to do. Often what follows is a prolonged negotiation to get person in crisis to accept help, but all we can offer them is a trip to the emergency room. They know what they will often find is hours of wait on our ambulance stretcher before they even get a room, and then even more hours before their care will begin.

We find more, and more that the capacity of local emergency departments overwhelmed by the numbers of those requiring treatment. With no place to put these clinically low triage priority patients, they often maintained on ambulance stretchers by EMT's for hours in the hospital, tying up crews needed to respond to the ongoing emergencies in the community.

Any step to identify additional facilities to serve those in mental, and behavioral crisis, is a step in the right direction. It will allow greater access for those suffering, greater flexibility to first responders, and keep ambulance and emergency rooms available to do what they were designed to do.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this testimony. I strongly support HB332 Mental Health-Emergency Facilities-Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers

Respectfully,

Brian Holtslander