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February 12, 2020

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Patricia F. O'Connor, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: House Bill 332 (Mental Health - Emergency Facilities List - Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers): Support

The Office of the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) supports House Bill 332's goals of (1) improving public access to information about mental health crisis services and (2) expanding emergency facilities available for emergency mental health evaluations. This bill provides that the list of emergency facilities published by the Department of Health at least once a year may include comprehensive crisis response centers; crisis stabilization centers; and crisis treatment centers. The list must be given to each health department, judge, sheriff's office, police station and Secret Service office in the State. Publicizing these services would help address stakeholder complaints that "there is a general lack of knowledge about what crisis services exist in the communities throughout Maryland," Maryland Behavioral Health Advisory Council's November 2017 Strategic Plan: 24/7 Crisis Walk-in and Mobile Crisis Team Services, p.21.

<<https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/The%202017%20Strategic%20Plan%2024-7%20Crisis%20Walk-in%20and%20Mobile%20Crisis%20Team%20Services.pdf>>

The list expansion also would potentially increase the number of locations where emergency evaluatees could be taken for evaluation as to whether or not emergency involuntary admission is necessary pursuant to the statutory scheme set forth in Health-General §§ 10-620 through 10-630. This would fulfill one of the recommendations (#6) made by the Behavioral Health Advisory Council in its report, p. 48.

We ask the committee to give the bill a favorable report.

cc: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee