



House Health and Government Operations Committee February 26, 2020

House Bill 1121 Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System

Support

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The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) supports House Bill 1121 and urges a favorable outcome. Maryland is in the midst of an opioid epidemic and behavioral health crisis. In a time where more focus and attention is on mental health and substance use disorder treatment, it is essential that the state maintain a central registry and referral system of providers offering these services.

It may be unbelievable, but currently, no such system exists - nothing even close. As providers of Opioid Treatment Services, there is only one database in which all other Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) can be found and that is through SAMHSA. OTPs are unique in that they need to be federally registered as well, which is not the case for most substance use disorder and behavioral health program. There is currently no website or phone number in which someone can reach out to find all types of behavioral providers near them - let alone answers to all the additional questions that stem from the referral process.

A registry and referral system is essential for the public at large and for the providers themselves in helping individuals receive appropriate care. The public at large has limited pathways to find services besides from web searches, calling local health departments, and word of mouth, all of which is hampered by the lack of centralized information. When an individual seeks treatment, time is of the essence. Providers understand the need for on demand services, because if they cannot reach an individual when they have made the decision to seek treatment, they may lose them forever. A centralized database streamlines this process and promotes the ultimate goal of getting individuals the treatment they need.

It is also beneficial to the providers who have patients receiving services. Many behavioral health conditions are co-morbid and require additional levels of care. Once the patient is in treatment, providers could more effectively find and refer individuals to addition services. Studies also show that retention in treatment is one of the highest indicators of success, so maintaining an individual treatment as the travel or move is paramount for continued success.

A central, electronic registry and referral process for behavioral health providers is an essential component in a well-functioning behavioral health system. MATOD urges a favorable report on HB 1121.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.