



HB 1121 – Maryland Mental Health & Substance Abuse Disorder Registry and Referral System

State of Maryland

**Maryland
Institute for
Emergency Medical
Services Systems**

653 West Pratt Street
Baltimore, Maryland
21201-1536

*Larry Hogan
Governor*

*Clay B. Stamp, NRP
Chairman
Emergency Medical
Services Board*

*Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director*

410-706-5074
FAX 410-706-4768

MIEMSS Position: Support

Rationale: HB 1121 will establish (1) the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry & Referral System with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and (2) the Maryland Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder Registry & Referral System Advisory Committee. The Registry & Referral System will catalogue and make available to health care practitioners available real-time mental health and substance abuse disorder services in the State, while the Advisory Committee will advise MDH on the development and implementation of the Registry and Referral System. The Registry & Referral System will be developed in collaboration with the State-designed Health Information Exchange.

- The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) is an independent state agency responsible for the coordination of emergency medical services in Maryland. MIEMSS is governed by the State EMS Board comprised of members appointed by the Governor.
- Patients with mental health and substance abuse disorders often seek treatment – voluntarily or involuntarily – through hospital emergency departments (EDs). These patients typically face delays in obtaining needed treatment due, in part, to the lack of visibility as to the availability of services, including inpatient, crisis and outpatient services.
- Patients with mental health and substance abuse disorders can wait in EDs for hours, days and sometimes weeks, for access to or placement in needed services, which can be highly detrimental to patient well-being.
- Delay of access to treatment / placement for this patient population also significantly contributes to ED overcrowding.
- Maryland’s ED overcrowding remains among the worst in the country. ED overcrowding seriously impacts EMS when EDs cannot timely accept EMS-transported patients. EMS personnel must wait in hospital EDs for extended times until ED beds become available to receive ambulance-transported patients. As a result, ambulances become “stuck” at hospital EDs, which keeps them out of service and unable to respond to other 9-1-1 emergency calls.
- MIEMSS believes the establishment of the Registry & Referral System will expedite access to treatment / placement for mental health and substance abuse patients who would otherwise wait in EDs for extended periods of time and will have a positive impact on ED overcrowding in Maryland hospitals.

MIEMSS Strongly Supports HB 1121 and Requests a Favorable Report