

William Cerrato, D.O. Testimony 2020 HB1461

As both an American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) certified general and child & adolescent psychiatrist, having lived on and provided mental healthcare for the Eastern Shore community in various capacities over the last 6 years, including several Medical Directorships, I support HB1461; Behavioral Health Programs-Outpatient Mental Health Centers-Medical And Clinical Directors.

**There are four general areas of concern:**

1. This is critical to note and therefore I listed it first. There is no shortage of psychiatrists who wish to serve as Medical Directors of Outpatient Mental Health Clinics (OMHCs) on the Eastern Shore. If there ever were to be, the shortage would be addressed by the Medical Director telehealth bill recently passed. It should not be lost on those voting on HB1461 though that as soon as Senate Bill 178/House Bill 570 Medical Directors of Outpatient Mental Health Presence through Telehealth , paired with Senate Bill 944/House Bill 1122 passed , the only OMHC on the Eastern Shore that was currently without a Medical Director filled the role with a Nurse Practitioner in New England through Telehealth. If the OMHC decided they could not find a physician on the Eastern shore and had to resort to telehealth one might be compelled to ask why the role was not filled by a physician.
2. Medical Directors at other medical facilities such as nursing homes, outpatient medical clinics, etc. are required to be physicians. In an era where both patients and their representatives are fighting for mental health parity, we should extend that recognition to this bill in that the practice of psychiatry be treated no different than any other medical discipline.
3. While Nurse Practitioners are Licensed Independent Practitioners in the state of Maryland, in the Medical Director role they would be tasked with supervising medical doctors. Their training is simply not commensurate with this responsibility. Most psychiatric nurse practitioner degrees require 2 years additional training post college and one exam to become board certified while medical doctors attend medical school for 4 years, residency and then often fellowship for minimum of an additional 4 years and often 5-6 years post medical school for a total of 9-10 years post college to become a psychiatrist. In addition to countless tests and practicums set forth by the institution a prospective doctor attends, there are three United States Medical Licensing Examinations (UMSLE step exams) to pass in order to progress through medical school and residency and board certification exams in general psychiatry and then the potential sub-specialty of choice.
4. COMAR requires the presence of a psychiatrist at Outpatient Mental Health Clinics.