



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2020

House Bill 607 – Public Safety – Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence

POSITION: SUPPORT

Delegates Charkoudian, Bartlett, Carr, Crutchfield, Cullison, Davis, Kelly, Moon, Shetty, Solomon, and Stewart, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 607 – Public Safety – Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence.

This legislation would establish the Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence in the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention to provide technical support to local governments, law enforcement, public safety agencies, behavioral health agencies, and crisis service providers and to develop and implement a crisis intervention model program; requiring the Office to appoint certain coordinators to the Center; requiring the Center to take certain actions; requiring a certain annual report; etc.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs, identified behavioral health problems as a prevalent concern in many rural counties. A Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence would benefit not only those suffering with a mental health crisis but also those providers responding to a crisis.

MRHA believes this legislation will help strengthen behavioral health care provision to one of Maryland's most vulnerable populations.

Lara Wilson, Executive Director, larawilson@mdruralhealth.org, 410-693-6988