



2022 SESSION
POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: HB 378
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance
POSITION: Support

TITLE: HB 378 – Maryland Health Care Commission – Palliative Care Services – Workgroup

BILL ANALYSIS

HB 378 - Maryland Health Care Commission – Palliative Care Services – Workgroup requires the Maryland Health Care Commission to convene a workgroup of interested stakeholders to study palliative care services in the State. The workgroup is required to examine:

- (1) the state of palliative care services offered in the State;
- (2) the capacity of palliative care providers to provide services;
- (3) any geographic areas where significant gaps in palliative care services may exist;
- (4) opportunities to collaborate with key stakeholders who are positioned to develop a strategy or plan for improving and expanding the provision of high-quality palliative medicine and care services;
- (5) the feasibility of financial support for a long-term expansion of palliative care services, including insurance coverage; and
- (6) a plan for ongoing data collection for purposes of the monitoring and improvement of palliative care services.

The bill requires the MHCC to submit an interim report to the Governor and General Assembly by July 1, 2023, and a final report by November 1, 2023, to include findings and recommendations to improve palliative care services in the State and the need for any legislative initiatives.

POSITION AND RATIONALE

The Maryland Health Care Commission supports HB 378.

Palliative care is an interdisciplinary medical caregiving approach aimed at optimizing quality of life and mitigating suffering among people with serious, complex illnesses.¹ Within the published literature, many definitions of palliative care exist. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes palliative care as "an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual."² In the past, palliative care was a disease specific approach, but today the WHO takes a more broad approach, that the principles of palliative care should be applied as early as possible to any chronic and ultimately fatal illness.³

The overall goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life of individuals with serious illness, any life-threatening condition which either reduces an individual's daily function or quality of life or increases caregiver burden, through pain and symptom management, identification and support of caregiver needs, and care coordination. Palliative care can be delivered at any stage of illness alongside other treatments with curative or life-prolonging intent and is not restricted to people receiving end-of-life care.⁴

Historically, palliative care services were focused on individuals with incurable cancer, but this framework is now applied to other diseases, such as severe heart failure.⁵ Palliative care can be initiated in a variety of care settings, including emergency rooms, hospitals, hospice facilities, or at home. Palliative care's focus is to improve the quality of life for those with chronic illnesses. It is commonly the case that palliative care is provided at the end of life, but it can be helpful for a person at any age and at any stage of illness.⁶

MHCC believes that efforts to increase acceptance of palliative care services by patients and the medical community and improving the availability and accessibility of palliative care

¹ Zhukovsky D (2019). Primer of Palliative Care. American Association of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. ISBN 9781889296081.

² "[WHO | WHO Definition of Palliative Care](#)". WHO. Archived from [the original](#) on 4 October 2003. Retrieved 4 December 2019.

³ Sepulveda, Cecilia; Marlin, Amanda; Yoshida, Tokuo; Ullrich, Andreas (2 August 2002). "[Palliative Care: The World Health's Global Perspective](#)". *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*. **24** (2): 91–96. doi:10.1016/S0885-3924(02)00440-2. PMID 12231124.

⁴ National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care (2018). "[Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care, 4th edition](#)". Retrieved 18 December 2019.

⁵ "[Heart failure - palliative care: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia](#)". *medlineplus.gov*. Retrieved 30 April 2020.

⁶ "What is Palliative Care? | Definition of Palliative Care | Get Palliative Care". Retrieved 12 May 2020.



services across the health care delivery system can improve the quality of life experienced by patients with serious illness through more effective relief of pain and stress. MHCC also believes that increasing the use of palliative care services as an approach to managing the impact of serious illness can reduce health care spending.

For these reasons, the Commission asks for a favorable report on HB 378.

Note: The Maryland Health Care Commission is an independent State agency, and the position of the Commission may differ from the position of the Maryland Department of Health.

