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February 23, 2022

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Delegate Shane Pendergrass
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **HB 517 - Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care - Establishment**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, asks the **HGO Committee to favorably report on House Bill 517.**

The Maryland Psychological Association asks that the committee vote in favor of the establishment and funding of the Consumer Health Access Program as developed in this bill. The Program is intended to serve as a hub and touchpoint for consumers to help them understand their coverage and access the providers and services they need. This will work to improve access to life-saving mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

Even before the challenges that were brought on by Covid-19, there has been an ongoing critical need for enhanced coordination and funding for the delivery of crises services for those experiencing behavioral and mental health issues.

Consumer oriented programs such as this can be an important frontline resource for people experiencing suicidality and other mental health crises. Not only do they work to lessen the immediacy of one's crisis, but often serve as entry points into the world of mental health services, by providing those in crisis with resources they might not otherwise have thought of or been able to access. During this time of increased awareness of mental health needs, the establishment of this Program seems to be a prudent move.

We strongly support the establishment of the Consumer Health Access Program. The MPA, therefore urges you to favorably report on **HB 517.**

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at exec@marylandpsychology.org if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee
Linda McGhee, Psy.D., JD
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.
R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs