



House Bill 129

Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services and Public Safety Answering Points – Modifications

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Health and Government Operations and
Judiciary Committees

Date: January 26, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 129 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would, among other provisions, revise the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program to require proposals detailing how law enforcement interaction with individuals in crisis will be minimized.

At present, several Maryland counties involve law enforcement in crisis response situations. Often, law enforcement units are the only entities available to respond to individuals suffering from an active mental health crisis, especially after business hours. Additional situations arise wherein behavioral health crisis response units request law enforcement backup to ensure a crisis worker's safety. In the direst circumstances, an individual suffering from an active mental health crisis may pose a clear and imminent threat to the public, necessitating law enforcement involvement.

Understanding how law enforcement is sometimes needed to respond to situations concerning individuals suffering from an active mental health crisis, MACo requests a small change to HB 129:

- On Page 3, Line 22, strike “**MINIMIZE**” and substitute “**DETAIL AND APPROPRIATELY MANAGE**”

This shift in language would enable jurisdictions with limited resources to preserve their current crisis response in applying for grants, while still pursuing the common goal of improving proper resources to the full range of crises requiring emergency response. It would also allow state officials to evaluate the role of law enforcement in responding to mental health crisis and note where additional non-law enforcement resources may need to be allocated.

MACo's amendment would preserve the sponsor's intent, while also preserving a useful tool for county behavioral health crisis response. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for HB 129.