



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **RE: HB 274 – Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times – Letter of Support with Amendments**

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for House Bill (HB) 274 – Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times (Task Force). HB 274 establishes a task force to study best practices for reducing emergency department (ED) wait times. The Task Force includes members of the General Assembly, the Health Secretary or designee, the Maryland Hospital Association, patient advocacy organizations, and an individual employed as medical staff in an ED. The Task Force will study best practices for ED staffing, triage, and bed availability among states that have a similar population to Maryland and rank within the top 50% of states in shortest ED wait time. The Taskforce will report findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on January 1, 2024.

MDH is committed to working with stakeholders to address ED wait times. ED wait times have been a challenge for many years and were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on behavioral health and the workforce. Reducing ED wait times will require coordination between state entities, emergency services providers, and health facilities, including hospitals, post-acute care facilities, and behavioral health facilities.

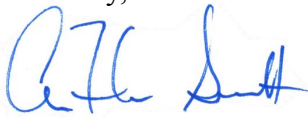
MDH supports HB 274 with the following amendments:

1. MDH recommends the Task Force include the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC), the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), and the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC). MIEMSS, runs the State's emergency medical system and has key data on ED effectiveness. HSCRC sets the rates for hospitals, including pay-for performance programs that incentivize quality outcomes and MHCC has regulatory authority over hospital capital projects (including the construction of emergency departments) through Certificates of Need.

2. Given the focus of the Task Force on EDs, MDH recommends that the Task Force be staffed by an organization that is more intimately involved with the day-to-day of EDs and hospitals, rather than MDH.
3. As currently drafted, HB 274 requires the Task Force to report findings and recommendations on or before January 1, 2024. The coordination of the Task Force members to research best practices, make recommendations, and complete a thorough report will require more than six months. MDH recommends amending the due date of the report from January 1, 2024 to July 1, 2024.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at [megan.peters@maryland.gov](mailto:megan.peters@maryland.gov) or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.  
Secretary