



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 7, 2023

To: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 48 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Collaborative Care Model Services - Implementation and Reimbursement Expansion

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 48. Maryland hospitals care for everyone who comes through their doors, but too often patients in crisis, particularly youth, visit hospital emergency departments due to a lack of behavioral health services in the community.

The Collaborative Care Model (CoCM) is a validated, patient-centered, evidence-based approach to integrate physical and behavioral health care in primary care settings—where most people with mild to moderate behavioral health conditions first seek, but frequently do not, receive behavioral health care services. CoCM resolves this issue by using a team-based approach in primary care settings to deliver:

- Care coordination and management
- Regular, systematic monitoring and treatment using a validated clinical rating scale
- Regular, systematic behavioral health caseload reviews and consultation for patients

As a result of the ongoing national health care provider shortage, including behavioral health professionals, Maryland patients frequently access behavioral health services for the first time when in crisis during visits to hospital emergency departments. When patients have access to these services in primary care settings, patients can get the help they need at the onset of behavioral health conditions and stay out of crisis. CoCM has been critical to maximize the number of patients that can be served by the limited number of behavioral health care professionals. Maryland hospitals are facing historic workforce shortages, and CoCM provides the necessary supports to ensure patients receive the best care.

Any sustainable solution will require a holistic approach like CoCM. This bill will improve the availability of behavioral health services, improve outcomes, keep people out of crisis, and decrease the number of unnecessary emergency department visits.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 48.

For more information, please contact:
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