



Testimony on HB 274
Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times
House Health & Government Operations Committee
February 21, 2023

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) is the leading voice for community-based providers serving the mental health and addiction needs of vulnerable Marylanders. Our 110 members serve the majority of those accessing care through the public behavioral health system. CBH members provide outpatient and residential treatment for mental health and addiction-related disorders, day programs, case management, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), employment supports, and crisis intervention.

The Maryland Hospital Association reported data on emergency department (ED) utilization from 2016-2020 that showed that behavioral health ED visits increased by 12% during that period while ED visits for all other conditions dropped by 11%. The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) did a 10-day analysis of ED boarders in November of 2021. They found that at any given time, 200 – 350 patients were boarding at Maryland’s EDs. Psychiatric patients made up 25% of the ED boarders but 68% of the ED boarding time.

It is clear from the data that behavioral health is overrepresented in terms of both ED utilization and ED boarding time. Both of these factors impact ED throughput. It is critical, therefore, that a representative of community behavioral health providers – who have a great deal of expertise in ways to avoid ED utilization – be at the table. Our network of providers has adopted care management and data collection practices that have clearly reduced both ED utilization and 30-day readmissions.

We support this bill with the following amendment:

After line 20 on p. 1, insert:

(iv) one representative of the Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland.

CBH is willing and able to contribute a significant amount of data, knowledge, and expertise to this problem.

We urge a favorable report on HB 274 with this amendment.

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