



March 11, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building – 3 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 888: Health - Local Behavioral Health Authorities and Oversight of Behavioral Health Programs

Dear Chair Beidle and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS support Senate Bill 888: Senate Bill 888: Health - Local Behavioral Health Authorities and Oversight of Behavioral Health Programs (SB 888) as major problems exist with fly-by-night behavioral health programs that are not compliant with regulations or laws, but the state lacks sufficient resources to identify, investigate, and sanction them. The measures introduced under SB 888 collectively contribute to a more robust and accountable behavioral health system, ultimately benefiting the well-being of individuals and communities in Maryland.

SB 888 seeks to increase oversight of Maryland's behavioral health programs by allowing local behavioral health authorities to hire their own inspectors. This additional layer of inspection can help identify and address issues promptly, ensuring that programs meet required quality and safety standards. Furthermore, requiring local authorities to track and forward complaints against behavioral health programs and healthcare providers fosters accountability within the system. SB 888 will ensure that complaints are properly addressed and that relevant regulatory bodies have the necessary information to take appropriate action, such as adjusting licensing or providing additional oversight. Finally, mandating community input in the adoption of agreements between behavioral health programs and local authorities promotes transparency and community engagement. This involvement can lead to programs that better meet the needs of the communities they serve, promoting trust and collaboration between stakeholders.



Therefore, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 888. If you have any questions concerning this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee