



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 6, 2024

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

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 1048- Behavioral Health Advisory Council and Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 1048. More than 200,000 patients each year visit Maryland emergency departments (ED) seeking behavioral health services. Maryland hospitals care for everyone who comes through their doors, but too often patients in crisis visit hospital EDs due to a lack of behavioral health services in the community.

HB 1048 would make changes to the Behavioral Health Advisory Council and the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access that were established to study, review, and report on the status of behavioral health in Maryland. In particular, the Council and Commission would coordinate with one another on their annual reports and meet jointly at least three times per year. Additionally, this bill would require the Commission to recommend how behavioral health and somatic services can be integrated in Maryland.

The ongoing behavioral health care crisis in Maryland contributes to ED length of stay and hospital discharge challenges. When patients have access to these services, they can get the help they need at the onset of behavioral health conditions and stay out of crisis. This bill will improve the availability of behavioral health services and outcomes, keep people out of crisis, and decrease unnecessary ED visits.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a *favorable* report on HB 1048.

For more information, please contact:
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