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January 28, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 328: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement

Dear Chairwoman 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 1100 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS supports Senate Bill 328: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement

An annual behavioral health wellness visit (ABHWW) is an appointment with a mental health professional to assess and promote overall well-being. The visit may include a discussion of symptoms, stressors, mood, sleep patterns, substance use, and current life circumstances. The mental health professional may also provide education, coping strategies, and resources to improve mental health and prevent future issues.

An ABHWW aims to check in on a person's mental health and provide support and resources to help maintain or improve their well-being. During the visit, the mental health professional will likely ask questions about the person's current emotional state, stress levels, and behavior patterns. They may also provide recommendations and interventions to manage stress and anxiety, improve sleep, and promote healthy habits. This visit can help individuals identify potential mental health issues early on, allowing for prompt treatment and recovery.

As such, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB83. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

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