

February 10, 2026

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and distinguished members of the Finance Committee,

Please accept this testimony in favor of SB326.

NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community

SB326 is a step toward improving access to mental health services in Maryland, by expanding the pool of qualified health care professionals to include physicians assistants who can assist in responding to mental health crises, manage facility admissions, and certify the needs of vulnerable individuals.

The most significant impact of this bill is the expansion of the workforce authorized to handle emergency mental health situations. Currently, individuals in crisis may face delays because only a limited number of practitioner types can petition for an emergency evaluation. By including the previously untapped pool of physicians assistants, we're allowing for faster interventions. Additionally, PAs will now be authorized to certify individuals for admission to mental health facilities and provide certificates of competency, amongst other duties. Including parity for physicians is an important step to expand the workforce and allow qualified professionals to act as a much-needed resource.

On behalf of NAMI Maryland's 11 local affiliates and a network of more than 60,000 Maryland families, individuals, community-based organizations and service providers, we ask for a favorable report of SB326.

Stephanie Slowly-Little
Executive Director
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