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Baltimore City

Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Testimony of Senator Antonio Hayes in Support of SB 441:

Mental Health - Emergency Facilities List - Comprehensive Crisis Response  
Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers

Chairman Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee,

Crisis services are an essential component of any comprehensive system of behavioral health care. Crisis services significantly reduce preventable behavioral health crises and offer earlier intervention to stabilize crises more quickly and at the lowest level of care appropriate. **Senate Bill 441** clarifies the types of facilities the Maryland Department of Health may designate as emergency facilities for purposes related to mental health evaluation.

The Maryland Department of Health publishes at least annually a list of emergency facilities related to emergency mental health evaluations. **SB 441** provides provisions to authorize the health department to include comprehensive crisis response centers, crisis stabilization centers, and crisis treatment centers on that list. Current law stipulates that the MHD publish a list of emergency facilities and their addresses and gives the list to each health department, judge of a court, sheriff's office, police station, and Secret Service office in Maryland.

"Emergency facility" includes a licensed general hospital that has an emergency room, unless MDH, after consultation with the health officer, exempts the hospital. A petition for emergency evaluation of an individual may be made only if the petitioner has reason to believe that the individual has a mental disorder and presents a danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others.

In 2015, there were more than 107,000 visits to emergency departments (EDs) in Maryland for behavioral health problems, of which 64% were mental health-related and 36% were substance use-related. Howard and Montgomery counties have relatively lower use of EDs, which may be due in part to having a more complete array of crisis services than most jurisdictions. Although

local hospital EDs exist in all parts of Maryland, they are not always set up to optimally provide crisis treatment. Many times, EDs in more rural areas do not have the ideal physical space or personnel to adequately manage those in a behavioral health crisis.

Having these emergency crisis centers on the Maryland Health Department list, as proposed by **SB 441**, will give a more holistic and complete context of mental health services provided in the state.

**I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 441.**

Respectfully,



Senator Antonio L. Hayes  
Chair, Baltimore City Senate Delegation  
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