



February 18, 2020

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley  
Senate Finance Committee  
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 519: Public Health - Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities - Safety Plan

Dear Chairman Kelley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) is a state medical organization whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, MPS works to ensure available, accessible and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branch of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland excluding the D.C. suburbs, MPS represents over 700 psychiatrists as well as physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS opposes Senate Bill 519 (SB 519) as this bill reinforces stigma and unwarranted fear of individuals presenting with mental or other forms of illness by suggesting that every facility which treats these individuals must protect the community from them. In actuality, people with mental illness are at increased risk of violence and victimization from the community. Therefore, portraying a behavioral health treatment program as a source of danger will deter people from seeking treatment at that program. In addition, SB 519 may inadvertently create liability issues for the clinic for circumstances that are beyond their control and thus drive up the cost of mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

For these reasons, MPS respectfully asks the committee for an unfavorable report on SB 519. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett, Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Legislative Action Committee for the Maryland Psychiatric Society