



February 18, 2020

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

RE: Support – SB 521:
Behavioral Health - Opioid Treatment Services Programs - Medical Director

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 521 (SB 521). Maryland continues to struggle with an opioid epidemic. Substance use disorders are conditions which commonly co-occur with serious mental illness. A bill such as SB 521, which has the potential to limit or close certain treatment facilities, would also have a negative impact on psychiatric patients. Integrated care, in other words care that is coordinated with medical and substance use treatment, is most effective for reducing morbidity and mortality, including suicide as some deaths from opioid use disorders are, in fact, suicide deaths.

For these reasons, MPS respectfully asks the committee for an unfavorable report on SB 521. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett, Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

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