

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Adelaide C. Eckardt

FROM: J. Steven Wise
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 18, 2020

RE: **OPPOSE** – Senate Bill 541 – *Mental Health – Involuntary Admissions – Procedures*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **opposes** Senate Bill 541.

This legislation would allow a psychologist or psychiatric nurse practitioner to be the sole health professional who examines a patient within 24 hours of an involuntary commitment. This runs counter to the current law which requires that a physician be involved at all stages of the involuntary commitment process.

MedChi believes that when a person's liberty is at stake, the most highly trained and educated health care professional should be involved in determining whether the patient should be committed, and that is a physician. An inpatient psychiatric unit is an acute care unit analogous to a coronary care unit or intensive care unit. Currently, no policy allows a complex acutely ill patient's care to be managed from beginning to end without the involvement of a physician. From MedChi's perspective, people with serious brain diseases deserve the same standard of care as people with serious medical illnesses.

Psychologists and psychiatric nurse practitioners are valuable members of the health care team, but MedChi believes that decisions of this order require physician involvement.

For these reasons, MedChi opposes Senate Bill 541.

For more information call:

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