



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

February 18, 2020

Senate Bill 624: Health – Mobile Response and Stabilization for Children and Families in Maryland – Study

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senators Benson, Klausmeier and Hayes, Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 624: Health – Mobile Response and Stabilization for Children and Families in Maryland – Study.

This legislation would require the Maryland Department of Health and the Governor's Commission to Study Mental and Behavioral Health in Maryland jointly to take certain actions in order to develop and implement a comprehensive mobile response and stabilization system for children and families in the State; and requiring the Department and the Commission jointly to submit their findings and recommendations to certain committees in the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2020.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland. Furthermore, Maryland law states that "many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure." (West's Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs, identified behavioral and mental health problems as a prevalent concern in many rural counties. The Commission to Study Mental and Behavioral Health in Maryland 2019 Report (www.governor.maryland.gov) puts forth several recommendations that MRHA believes would strengthen behavior and mental health care provision in Maryland's rural communities. This legislation is aimed at providing a holistic and comprehensive response to mental health emergencies for families.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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