



February 26, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support with Amendments – HB 666: Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Dear Chairman Pendergrass 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 supports House Bill 666: Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (HB 666). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include abuse that is physical, emotional, and/or sexual in nature; living with an alcohol or drug abuser; domestic violence; and emotional and physical neglect. Studies have consistently shown that those who experience ACEs have an increased prevalence of heart disease risk factors, the rate of antidepressant usage, and the likelihood of suicide and intravenous drug use. In each case, the effect size rose along with the number of ACEs. ACEs have also been correlated with physical illnesses. Thus, the findings of the workgroup on ACEs envisioned in HB 666 is vitally important.

MPS believes, however, that the members of the workgroup could be better defined. Specifically, either "behavioral health expert" or "mental health expert" should be amended to expressly include a child and adolescent psychiatrist. Child and adolescent psychiatrists are physicians who arguably have the greatest knowledge regarding the provision of care for this population and are often tasked with treating the traumatic symptoms that may occur as a result of ACEs.



MPS, therefore, respectfully asks the committee to add a child and adolescent psychiatrist to the group, replacing one of the undefined terms, "behavioral health expert" and "mental health expert", and then provide a favorable report to HB 666

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.