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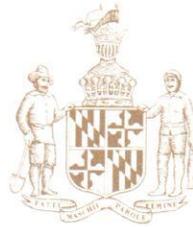
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Vice Chair

Health and Government
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Government Operations and
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House Bill 1121 – Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System

House Health and Government Operations Committee

SPONSOR TESTIMONY: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk (SUPPORT, as amended)

Chairman Pendergrass and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill (HB) 1121, which will task the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) in concert with the State-Designated Health Information Exchange to design and implement a system that will make behavioral health and crisis services more accessible to providers treating patients with behavioral health or substance use disorder issues.

Within Maryland, and, in fact, nationwide, there are significant barriers to mental health care. Statistically, an American with mental illness is more likely to not receive mental health care than they are to receive treatment. One of the obstacles to accessing treatment is the difficulty providers often have in locating services for their patients. HB 1121 seeks to alleviate this problem in our state by creating the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System which will be developed and implemented by the MDH in collaboration with the Health Information Exchange.

The Registry and Referral System will include a searchable inventory of providers of mental health and substance use disorder services, including inpatient, outpatient, and crisis services. It will allow providers to update registry information including current availability of services. Health care providers will be able electronically refer patients to providers in the registry.

To achieve this, HB 1121 creates the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System Advisory Committee which will provide advice to the Department on the development and implementation of the Registry, and report annually to the House Health and Government Operations Committee and to the Senate Finance Committee on the status of the system.

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The bill requires each hospital to make staff available to identify appropriate available services for patients in need of mental health or substance use disorder services, and assist patients in accessing these services. Services will be tracked by type, location, and organization, with a friendly amendment adding payer to that list. The registry will be available to the public as well as providers.

A pilot program of the system will be implemented in at least two Maryland jurisdictions to allow the MDH to assess the feasibility of the program and whether all mental health and substance use disorder providers will be required to update their profiles.

I respectfully request that you help address the current behavioral health and substance use disorder crisis by voting favorably on House Bill 1121.