

House Bill 1169 Hospitals – Community Benefits
Health and Government Operations Committee
March 2, 2020
Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 1169.

HB 1169 revises current hospital community benefit reporting and needs assessment procedures to maximize transparency and provide for input from a broad range of stakeholders, including consumers, health care providers, community leaders and others. Increased consultation with affected individuals and groups will help ensure the assessments and subsequent investments reflect the true needs of each community.

State and federal law requires hospitals to complete needs assessments to prioritize the health needs of local communities and, presumably, to best direct spending of community benefit dollars. In 2015, MHAMD examined several community needs assessments and the corresponding community benefit reports filed with the HSCRC to determine the correlation between the two reports. A review of the 2013 and 2014 community needs assessment reports demonstrated that more than 90% of hospitals reported behavioral health as an unmet need in their communities. However, the community benefit reports lack specificity, making it impossible to determine whether actual spending is driven by the unmet needs identified in the needs assessments. Because the community benefit spending data reports (which detail actual spending) and the community benefit narrative reports (which describe the specific programs or initiatives) cannot be reconciled, the public is unable to determine if actual spending is being directed into critical unmet needs, like community behavioral health.

HB 1169 would ensure hospitals are considering the feedback of key community constituencies when identifying local health needs, and it would provide a better understanding of whether the resulting investments are meeting those needs. For the reasons above, **MHAMD supports HB 1169 and urges a favorable report.**