



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 11, 2020

To: The Honorable William C. Smith Jr., Chairman
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Erin Dorrien, Director, Policy
Maryland Hospital Association

Re: Letter of Support- Senate Bill 305 - Public Safety- Crisis Intervention Team- Center of Excellence

Dear Chairman Smith:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 61 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 305. Maryland's hospitals are focused on expanding access to behavioral health care to support the one in five Marylanders who suffer from a behavioral health condition. Unfortunately, too often law enforcement agencies are the first responders for those in a mental health crisis. For people with a mental health condition, entering the criminal justice system is often easier than accessing the mental health treatment system.

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model of community policing is a nationally recognized model to improve interaction between law enforcement and individuals in mental health crisis. These programs train officers to identify people in need of mental health care and de-escalate situations. They also can include collaboration between local police departments and clinicians and link individuals to treatment rather than jail.

SB 305 establishes a Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence (CITCE) in the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP). The CITCE would provide technical support to local governments, law enforcement, public safety agencies, behavioral health agencies, and crisis service providers and develop and implement a "crisis intervention model program." The bill also establishes a Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee for the CITCE.

SB 305 builds on improvements already occurring locally and expands a working model to ensure Marylanders have access to the behavioral health care they need. For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report on SB 305.

For more information, please contact:
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