



March 6, 2020

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee
Room 101, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support with Amendments – HB 1476 Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities - Establishment

Dear Chairman Clippinger 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 1476: Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities – Establishment. The issue of providing continuity of care to inmates with mental health issues is something MPS/SMPS has dealt with for some time. Incarcerated individuals have a higher prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders than the general population. In our experience, continuity of care prevents relapse and enables offenders to effectively comply with conditions of parole or probation. For these reasons, an independent review board for inmate healthcare would only help with the rehabilitative process of incarceration.

MPS does ask, however, that this board not only evaluate somatic health care issues, but mental health care issues, which is equally as important for the reasons stated above. MPS, therefore suggests the following amendment to HB 1476:

On page 3, in line 9 strike “and”; on the same page, in line 11 after “Diseases” insert “AND”; in the next line insert, “(6) A PSYCHIATRIST WITH EXPERIENCE IN CORRECTIONAL HEALTHCARE.”

With the amendment adopted, MPS would then ask the committee for a favorable report of HB 1476. 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