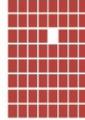




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Maryland Chapter  
**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
 EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS**



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF  
 COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
 The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair  
 Members, Senate Finance Committee  
 Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
 The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
 J. Steven Wise  
 Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: February 9, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 286 – *Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 286.

Senate Bill 286 makes a number of notable modifications to Maryland’s current Behavioral Health Crisis Services Grant program and other crisis response initiatives that will align Maryland’s framework with nationally recognized best practices for behavioral health crisis services. The legislation expands the use of 24/7 mobile crisis teams, which is a team including a licensed mental health professional and peer support specialist, to respond to people in crisis in the community, rather than having police respond. This framework will help countless individuals overcome life-threatening crises and will reduce unnecessary emergency department use and minimize police interaction for people in behavioral health crises.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the need for behavioral health services. A comprehensive, integrated crisis response system is the backbone of any successful behavioral health system. It can serve as the entry way to help individuals in need of care, while reducing harm and overall costs for the system. While many jurisdictions have sought to establish behavioral health crisis response services, there remains significant gaps within those systems and across the State generally. Because of these system gaps, too often communities rely on hospitals and overuse law enforcement to respond to people in crisis. Passage of Senate Bill 286 will serve to expand and improve Maryland’s crisis response infrastructure to achieve the objective of ensuring that behavioral health crisis services are available 24/7 across the State. A favorable report is requested.

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