



## **Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association**

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 2, 2021

House Bill 108 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Charkoudian, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 108 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications.

MRHA supports this legislation that require proposals to the Maryland Department of Health requesting Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program funding contain certain response standards that minimize law enforcement interaction for individuals in crisis, and requiring a local behavioral health authority, for each service or program that receives funding under the Program, to make certain information available to the public. This legislation would importantly prioritize behavioral health services to individuals in crisis and would dismantle barriers to access to these crisis behavioral health services. Further, the data that would be available from this legislation would allow communities to understand and act on the behavioral health service needs of its citizens in crisis.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland. Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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