



## HB1344

### Mental Health Law – Reform of Laws and Delivery of Services

MCAA Position: **SUPPORT**

TO: Health and Government Operations

DATE: March 11, 2021

FROM: T.D. Reece, President

MCAA would like to offer its support for HB1344. There is no greater continuing concern to those responsible for the management of our State's local correctional facilities than the care of individuals committed to our custody with serious and persistent mental health needs. Over the past several years, our State has made improvements in assisting corrections in the management of individuals with unmet mental health needs arriving at our facility with a severe mental illness. The State has worked diligently to reduce the number of days an individual is held, from date of arrest, to placement in a state hospital for treatment, however, we strongly feel more needs to be done. Until Maryland funds the creation of emergency diversionary beds for individuals suffering from a severe mental illness at the time of arrest to allow for immediate placement. The issue may improve, but it will continue.

Now before you, to assist in continuing this incredible and much needed work is HB 1344 defining "Danger to life or safety of the individual or of others." The certification process in a local correctional facility for involuntary admission is utilized for the most acute care of individuals who may present an **immediate** threat to themselves or others and need prompt consideration for priority placement due to both the immediacy and imminent threat being posed to the safety of the inmate or another individual.

Delays in needed hospital treatment results in increased correctional staff costs, extreme stress on the staff and other inmates, increased violence and suicides gestures and attempts, as well as longer hospitalizations and diminished recovery. Absent timely treatment, inmates can be released more ill and sometimes more dangerous than when they were initially incarcerated. Use of Restricted Housing dramatically increases when appropriate hospitalization and treatment is delayed or denied. Research clearly indicates appropriate and timely mental health care and treatment reduces recidivism, institutional violence, and homelessness, while increasing post release success.