



February 4, 2021

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley  
3 East - Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support with Amendments – SB 286: Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services –  
Modifications

Dear Chairman Kelley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work 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 branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS support Senate Bill 286: Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications (SB 286) as the expansion of mental health crisis services is needed now more than ever in Maryland. Most notably, behavioral health crisis response services provide much-needed support to police officers whose training has oftentimes left them ill-equipped to respond to incidents where individuals are experiencing mental health crises.

However, MPS and WPS ask the Committee to consider amending the bill to allow local health authorities to operate their crisis teams within the realities of their fiscal and personnel constraints. Although individuals in desperate need of mental health services may benefit from unlimited access to mental health clinicians, smaller and less populated jurisdictions simply lack the resources to provide such continuity of service. By striking the need for mobile crisis teams to operate twenty-four (24) hours a day and seven (7) days a week, this body would ensure that local jurisdictions can adequately allocate their limited resources to this vital effort.

MPS and WPS suggest the amendment reads as follows:

On page 5, in line 27 strike “OPERATES 24 HOURS A DAY AND 7 DAYS A WEEK” and substitute “OPERATES AS REQUIRED BY THE LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT.”



**Washington  
Psychiatric Society**

With the amendment adopted, MPS and WPS would then ask the committee for a favorable report of SB 286. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Joint Legislative Action Committee