



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 2, 2021

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 108- Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services- Modifications

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 108. Maryland hospitals are on the front lines of the state's behavioral health crisis. However, hospital care is only necessary for the most acute conditions. Maintaining health requires a robust system of community care.

The hospital field is supportive of initiatives to expand access to crisis services outside of the emergency department (ED). During the 2020 legislative session, MHA supported HB 332, which required the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop a model program for crisis stabilization centers. Crisis stabilization centers offer care for individuals suffering from a behavioral health crisis and helps individuals remain in a more appropriate, therapeutic setting than a hospital ED. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MDH has not begun the stakeholder work to develop the model program.

Through the Regional Partnership Catalyst Grant Program, the Health Services Cost Review Commission is providing grants to improve access to crisis services beginning January 1, 2021. Applicants were required to show proof of supporting the implementation and expansion of behavioral health crisis management models, with specific emphasis placed on the "Crisis Now: Transforming Services is Within Our Reach" action plan developed by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.¹ Three awards were granted totaling \$79.1 million over five years to transform crisis care in the regions.²

HB 108 will allow further investment in crisis services, particularly mobile crisis which is desperately needed. We urge a favorable report on HB 108.

For more information, please contact:
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¹Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission. (November 2020). "[Regional Partnership Catalyst Grant Program Final Funding Recommendation](#)." "

² ibid