



10480 Little Patuxent Parkway, Ste 910, Columbia, MD 21044. Office 410-992-4258. Fax: 410-992-7732. [www.marylandpsychology.org](http://www.marylandpsychology.org)

February 16, 2021

**OFFICERS OF THE BOARD**

***President***

Esther Finglass, PhD

Delegate Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
6 Bladen Street

***President-elect***

Linda McGhee, PsyD, JD

Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***Past President***

Kimberly Y. Campbell, PhD

***Secretary***

Laura Schaffner Gray, PhD

RE: HB 537 – Mental Health Law – Petitions for Emergency Evaluation – Procedures

***Treasurer***

Brian Corrado, PsyD

Position: **Unfavorable**

***Representatives-at-large***

Andrea Chisolm, PhD  
Shalena Heard, PhD

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

***Representative to APA Council***

Katherine Killeen, PhD

The Maryland Psychological Association represents over 1000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state. **We write in opposition to HB 537, which would require a variety of health care professionals, including psychologists, to take an individual to the nearest emergency facility if the healthcare professional (psychologist) is presented with a petition signed by either a health care professional or a peace officer or has been endorsed by a court within 5 days prior to the presentation.**

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

***Communications***

Robyn Waxman, PhD

***Diversity***

Whitney Hobson, PsyD

***Early Career Psychologist***

Meghan Mattos, PsyD

While we support the legislation's intent of reducing the danger to people in crisis from negative interactions with peace officers as well as protecting peace officer's safety, we believe there are better ways to accomplish this goal. We would be glad to work with legislators on seeking solutions to this challenge.

***Educational Affairs***

Laurie Friedman Donze, PhD

***Ethics***

Cindy Sandler, PhD

Psychologists/healthcare professionals are not trained, nor do they possess the appropriate equipment and/or materials to safely transport a violent individual. We do not possess either the knowledge or training of how to protect one's self while transporting a dangerous individual. As a result, this bill has the potential to place both the patient and healthcare provider/psychologist in physical danger.

***Legislative***

Pat Savage, PhD

***Membership***

Rebecca Resnik, PsyD

As written, this bill would put psychologists/health care practitioners in the position of having to determine the legitimacy of an emergency petition prepared by someone else, something that is not within our scope of practice. Additionally, an unintended consequence of this legislation could be the reduction of petitions for evaluation, based on the concerns expressed above.

***Professional Practice***

Selena Snow, PhD

**PROFESSIONAL AFFAIRS**

**OFFICER**

Paul C. Berman, PhD

For the reasons noted above the Maryland Psychological Association asks for an **UNFAVORABLE** report on House Bill 537. Thank you for considering our comments on HB 537. If we can be of any further assistance as the Senate Finance Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or [exec@marylandpsychology.org](mailto:exec@marylandpsychology.org).

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Stefanie Reeves, CAE

*Esther Finglass*  
Esther Finglass, Ph.D.  
President

*R. Patrick Savage, Jr.*  
R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association  
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs