

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Bill: HB537- Mental Health Law - Petitions for Emergency Evaluation - Procedures

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

This is a letter in **Support with Amendment of House Bill 537**, requesting inclusion of PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (PAs) as professionals able to submit a petition for emergency evaluation.

Senate Bill 398 is being submitted to change components of the procedure to file a petition for an emergency evaluation. In the interest of protecting the public as well as the individual, a petition may be filed for an emergency evaluation if the individual has a mental disorder and presents a danger to their life or safety of themselves or others. As it is currently written, if the petition for an emergency evaluation is made by “A physician, psychologist, clinical social worker, licensed clinical professional counselor, clinical nurse specialist in psychiatric and mental health nursing, psychiatric nurse practitioner, licensed clinical marriage and family therapist, or health officer or designee of a health officer who has examined the individual or a peace officer”, then it is considered authoritative at face value and the individual being petitioned is to be taken to an emergency facility. If another individual submits the petition, then it must be taken to the court for review.

In Maryland, physician assistants (PAs) are licensed healthcare providers, who are able to examine, diagnose, and treat a variety of diseases, including those related to mental health. In contrast to physicians and nurse practitioners, if a PA is to file a petition regarding an individual, their education, training, and licensure is not recognized as having any authority, and the request must be submitted for a court evaluation to determine the next step. This is true even when the PA has a long-standing medical relationship with an individual or even more advanced training in psychiatric or crisis evaluation. To exclude PAs as professionals able to file a petition creates an unnecessary roadblock in getting an individual the emergency evaluation that they need in a prompt and efficient manner.

Please consider this request to include PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (PAs) in House Bill 537 as professionals able to submit a petition for emergency evaluation.

Thank you for the consideration,



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