

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

HB 849 Public Health - Medical Records - Fees

March 2, 2021

House Health and Government Operations Committee

My name is Yvonne M. Perret, LCSW-C. I am a licensed clinical social worker whose work for the past 27 years has focused on assisting adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who have diagnoses of serious mental illness or co-occurring disorders. The aim is to access resources and benefits so as to end their homeless status. I am also the primary founder of a program called SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery), which is a model that trains others in assisting this population. SOAR exists in all counties throughout Maryland; those who are trained are staff of nonprofit and public agencies. Such programs have no budget to pay for obtaining medical records, a key part of the SOAR process. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of House Bill 849.

HB 849 will eliminate fees for medical records for people applying for public benefits such as Social Security Disability.

This bill is critical in my efforts to assist seriously mentally ill people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness apply for public benefits. Fees for medical records are needed to prove disability but, very often, neither the applicant nor those assisting them, either through SOAR or other not-for-profit work, have no funds to pay for these records.

HB 849 would ensure that low income Marylanders can access the records they need to secure vital, and often life-saving, public benefits. For this reason, I support HB 849 and urge a favorable report.