



February 3, 2021

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support with Amendments – HB 496: Counselors Not Cops Act

Dear Chairman Kaiser 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 HB 496: Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act), which supports a restorative justice model of intervention with students who exhibit disruptive or potentially criminal behavior. Also, the bill's inclusion of mental health clinicians will provide an intervention known as multi-systemic therapy (MST), a model which has shown robust efficacy for the reduction in juvenile delinquency and recidivism.

In 2014, Jessica May, Kristina Osmond, and Stephen Billick published a study entitled "Juvenile Delinquency Treatment and Prevention: A Literature Review."<sup>1</sup> The study made three insightful observations worth noting when deliberating the merits of this legislation:

- 1) "These innovative programs are somewhat expensive, nonetheless are quite cost-effective as the cost to society of adjudication, incarceration and victim damages are significantly greater."
- 2) "In the last three decades there has been ample research to demonstrate that instituting multi-systemic therapy for serious juvenile offenders, keeping them in the community with intensive intervention, significantly reduces recidivism. MST focuses on prosocial activity and less association with deviant peers. It has been implemented and

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<sup>1</sup> Psychiatr Q (2014) 85:295–301, DOI 10.1007/s11126-014-9296-4 (9 March 2014)



researched in dozens of research trials and case studies, and repeatedly received significant ratings in both effectiveness and efficacy."

- 3) "When comparing the cost to society, it has been shown that MST yields substantial returns on the initial investment. [T]he net program cost for MST was near \$4,743 for each participant. However, this investment eventually goes on to save taxpayers and crime victims \$131,918 for each MST participant. A similar projection is made with the Perry Preschool Program, which costs \$14,716 and yields \$105,000 per participant in savings. Results from the Syracuse University Family Development Program found a heightened cost to the criminal justice system for non-program participants. Based on data collected at their longer term follow up, researchers found the costs totaled \$186 per program participant versus \$1,985 per control individual. These programs represent a stark contrast to other intervention programs such as Scared Straight programs and juvenile boot camps, which yield respectively a cost of \$24,531 and \$3,587 instead of providing a savings to society as did the previously discussed programs."

For all the reasons stated, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report of HB 496 as both the State and the juveniles served will see a meaningful return on the investment made. 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