



February 17, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 637: Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion (Behavioral Health System Modernization Act)

Dear Chairman Kelley and Honorable Members of the Committees:

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 strive 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/WPS supports Senate Bill 637: Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion (Behavioral Health System Modernization Act), a very comprehensive approach that covers many areas that are required to provide ideal expanded crisis services and more intensive community-based services that are seen as "gold standards" but not funded currently.

The demand in Maryland for high-quality mental health and substance use services has never been higher when one considers the following:

- In February 2021, nearly 40% of Marylanders reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, yet nearly a third of those individuals were unable to get needed counseling or therapy.
- Over 45% of Maryland youth aged 12 - 17 who have depression did not receive any mental health care in the last year.
- 650 Maryland lives were lost to suicide last year.
 - 188,000 adults had thoughts of suicide.
 - Suicides among Marylanders aged 18-25 increased by 80% from the first half of 2020-2021.



- The largest increase in suicide attempts and emergency department visits has been among Marylanders aged 65+ (over 90% increase from 2018-2021).
- An estimated 2,876 Marylanders lost their lives to overdose between April 2020 and April 2021, a rate that ranked 7th highest in the country during that period.
- Maryland has 48 federally designated mental health professional shortage areas, including 16 entire counties.
- Maryland hospitals saw more than 417,000 visits for behavioral health crises in 2019.

If enacted, SB 637 will accomplish the following in addressing the statistics above:

- Increase comprehensive community-based treatment by expanding Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs);
- Improve health outcomes and treatment quality by expanding the delivery of individualized, data-driven measurement-based care in behavioral health care settings and by enhancing care coordination in primary care settings;
- Strengthen the behavioral health workforce by expanding resources and support for peer support networks and certified peer recovery specialists;
- Improve care for children and youth with behavioral health needs by increasing the availability of home- and community-based wraparound services; and
- Reduce reliance on law enforcement and emergency departments by enhancing Maryland's network of crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams, and crisis stabilization facilities

SB 637 is a positive step toward improving psychiatric crisis management and community mental health treatment in the state with an appropriate amount of funding to accomplish its goals. MPS/WPS, therefore, ask this committee for a favorable report on SB 637.

If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee