



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, 2022

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Annapolis, MD 21401

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**RE: SB 549 - SUPPORT**

**Secretary**  
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Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

**Treasurer**  
Brian Corrado, PsyD

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, asks the **Senate Finance Committee to favorably report on SB 549.**

**Representatives-at-large**  
Shalena Heard, PhD  
Jessica Rothstein, PsyD

The following are a few examples of the many problems one large mental health practice on the Eastern Shore has experienced because of the numerous administrative problems which started with the award of the ASO contract to Optum. The mental health practice had to significantly reduce its services (by over 50%) since Optum took over as ASO of the Medical Assistance program. They have had to do this despite the ongoing need for behavioral health services. The downsizing was necessary in part due to the pandemic, and in part due to Optum's software, policies, provider relations, and billing problems.

**Representative to APA Council**  
Peter Smith, PsyD

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Robyn Waxman, PhD

1. Optum launched its claims processing system on August 3, 2020. Core functions needed to process claims for providers to be fully compensated for their work are still not fully functioning. This has resulted in a reduction in staff, reduction in services to clients, and a reduction in capacity to see clients.
2. Psychiatric Rehabilitation (PRP) is a cost-effective way to provide skill building services to Maryland's chronically and severely mentally ill. The practice has 3 PRP programs. Initial billings were completed based on instructions from Optum. They then received additional instructions over the next 4 months from Optum support staff regarding billing for PRP services. Each time PRP claims were submitted, however, the majority of claims were denied, reportedly due to not filling in the claims properly, even though all instructions were followed. Many PRP claims are still being wrongly denied. Because of the difficulty in determining what has and not been paid, the practice still does not have an adequate picture of claims paid.
3. The mental health practice has experienced ongoing problems with claims retractions in error but still not paid and claims denied in error. These problems have required significant staff administrative time to attempt to obtain payments, to try to correct errors in payments, and to determine what has and has not been properly reimbursed.
4. Optum has not yet delivered an accurate accounting of what monies the practice allegedly owes and even what has and has not been properly billed and paid.

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For these reasons, and many others, the **MPA urges the Senate Finance Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 549.**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Stefanie Reeves, CAE

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at [exec@marylandpsychology.org](mailto:exec@marylandpsychology.org) if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

*Linda McGhee*

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., JD  
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