



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Senate Finance Committee

February 4, 2022

Senate Bill 323- Maryland Medical Assistance Program –Prior Authorization- Prohibition

Letter of Information

Chair Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) wishes to provide this letter of information regarding SB323 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Prior Authorization- Prohibition.

MRHA supports efforts to eliminate barriers to health care and promote health equity, particularly for vulnerable populations. Improving access to timely and effective treatment for substance use disorder is a worthy goal and one that MRHA supports.

However, it is important to note that other covered treatment options exist beyond those identified in the bill. Further, the bill eliminates authorizations which can shield providers and patients from price gouging on these particular medications. MRHA urges careful consideration of the externalities of this proposal, particularly as it relates to access to effective behavioral health treatment in rural communities.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MRHA thanks you for your careful consideration of this issue.

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