

Senate Bill 223 State Government – State Facilities Changes and Closures – Procedures

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 7, 2023

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 223 with the addition of a friendly amendment.

SB 223 establishes notice, public input, and reporting requirements related to the closure or repurposing of state facilities.

The need for the procedural safeguards outlined in SB 223 became urgently apparent in May 2022, when the Board of Public Works considered a Maryland Department of Health (MDH) proposal to transfer the Spring Grove Hospital Center to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. MDH offered this proposal without any open process or discussion about the plans for Spring Grove, the second oldest state psychiatric facility in the nation.

While we did not oppose the transfer, we did voice several concerns about this lack of process. Among these concerns, there was no mention of the Spring Grove transfer in the [MDH Facilities Master Plan](#) (Master Plan); there was no public plan outlining a strategy for ensuring adequate and modern inpatient capacity upon the closure of Spring Grove; the proposed transfer was requested prior to completion of a forthcoming bed capacity and needs assessment outlined in the Master Plan; and there was no plan for reinvesting any moneys realized from the transfer into community behavioral health services, as has been done after prior facility closures consistent with Health-General §10-208.

The requirements of SB 223 will provide for a more public and comprehensive process moving forward. However, we do request one amendment. Prior to closing a facility, the bill requires the principal department to submit a report justifying the closure (pg. 4, line 1). While the report is required to include a plan for assisting state employees affected by the closure (pg. 4, line 22), it does not require a plan for assisting individuals residing and/or receiving services at the facility. Accordingly, we request the following amendment:

On page 4, line 22, add “(III) ANY PLANS FOR ASSISTING AFFECTED INDIVIDUALS RESIDING AND/OR RECEIVING SERVICES AT THE FACILITY”

SB 223 will ensure future state hospital closures are preceded by a proactive process with the community to identify a plan for the property and the patients residing there. **For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 223 and urges a favorable report.**

For more information, please contact Dan Martin at (410) 978-8865