

Marylanders for Patient Rights

MARYLANDERS FOR PATIENT RIGHTS REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT ON SB387 Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times

Maryland has had the longest Emergency Department (ED) wait time in 50 states for seven years. According to recent data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Maryland patients spend an average time of 228 minutes waiting in the ED—almost four hours. Maryland has sustained this low ranking since 2015 -- years before the COVID pandemic began.

Going to the ED in Maryland has become an endurance contest, with some patients reporting wait times of over 24 hours. Longer wait times are more than an inconvenience for emergency room patients. Researchers found that long emergency wait times were linked to an increased risk of adverse events including hospitalization or death.

Excessive wait times can act as a barrier to access to health care. With an average wait time of almost four hours, frustrated patients may leave without the treatment they need. ED staff who have worked long hours under stressful conditions too often bear the brunt of frustration from angry patients, tired of lengthy waits and uncertainty about timely care.

How to reduce ED wait times: Learning from other states. What can we learn from other states with shorter ED wait times? For example, states with population sizes comparable to Maryland such as Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin all had significantly shorter wait times.

The bill proposes a study to examine best practices in EDs in states that: 1) are similar in population size to Maryland; 2) have at least one city of approximately 500,000 residents; and 3) rank in the top 50% of states or higher in shortest ED wait time. Parameters that will be examined include ED staffing, patient:caregiver ratios, triage practices, and bed availability.

To conduct the study, a focused task force will be impaneled by the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) which would include state legislators, patient advocates, experts in emergency care, the Maryland Dept. of Health, and the Maryland Hospital Association. The results of the study, which would be publicly reported to the MGA in Jan. 2024, would provide recommendations for improvements to ED practices in Maryland to help reduce current wait times.

There is a human cost to inaction on long ED wait times. According to HSCRC data, there are about 2 million visits to Maryland EDs per year. Researchers reported that reducing ED wait times by even one hour could potentially decrease the number of deaths in lower acuity patients by 13%.¹

We urge you to provide a favorable report on SB387. Thank you.



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Marylanders for Patient Rights

¹ “Association between waiting times and short term mortality and hospital admission after departure from emergency department,” British Medical Journal citation: *BMJ 2011;342:d2983*

ER wait times, by state

Maryland is the state where patients spend the longest time in the emergency department before leaving the hospital, according to research by IT service automation company [SysAid](#).

The research examined CMS data to see which states had the shortest average (median) time patients spend in the emergency department before leaving, in minutes. The data covered Jan. 7, 2020, to March 31, 2021.

While Maryland has the longest hospital waiting time, North Dakota has the shortest.

Here are the waiting times by state, from shortest to longest:

Note: The list includes ties.

1. North Dakota: 104 minutes
2. South Dakota: 113 minutes
3. Nebraska: 114 minutes
4. Oklahoma: 115 minutes
5. Hawaii: 117 minutes
5. Kansas: 117 minutes
7. Iowa: 123 minutes
8. Mississippi: 124 minutes
9. Arkansas: 127 minutes
9. Montana: 127 minutes
11. Louisiana: 128 minutes
12. Minnesota: 129 minutes
13. Utah: 130 minutes
13. Vermont: 130 minutes
15. Idaho: 131 minutes
16. Indiana: 133 minutes
17. Wisconsin: 136 minutes
18. Wyoming: 137 minutes
19. Alaska: 138 minutes
19. Washington: 138 minutes

21. Alabama: 139 minutes
21. Texas: 139 minutes
23. Colorado: 140 minutes
24. West Virginia: 141 minutes
25. Ohio: 143 minutes
26. Missouri: 144 minutes
27. Nevada: 145 minutes
27. Tennessee: 145 minutes
29. Georgia: 146 minutes
30. Maine: 147 minutes
31. New Mexico: 150 minutes
32. Kentucky: 151 minutes
32. South Carolina: 151 minutes
34. Michigan: 153 minutes
35. New Hampshire: 154 minutes
35. Virginia: 154 minutes
37. Florida: 155 minutes
38. Illinois: 157 minutes
38. North Carolina: 157 minutes
38. Oregon : 157 minutes
38. Pennsylvania: 157 minutes
42. California: 164 minutes
43. Connecticut: 166 minutes
44. New Jersey: 173 minutes
45. Arizona: 176 minutes
46. New York: 184 minutes
47. Rhode Island: 185 minutes
48. Massachusetts: 189 minutes

49. Delaware: 195 minutes

50. Maryland: 228 minutes

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<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/rankings-and-ratings/er-wait-times-by-state.html>

Hospital	ER Wait Time, Minutes*
Northwest	367
MedStar Franklin Square	364
Holy Cross Silver Spring	346
Adventist White Oak	346
Grace Medical	301
Johns Hopkins Bayview	300
MedStar Southern Maryland	296
UMMC	293
Holy Cross Germantown	275
Doctor's Community Hospital	270
UM BWMC	270
Johns Hopkins Hospital	269
MedStar St. Mary's	265
UM St. Joseph	263
UM Upper Chesapeake	263
Frederick	261
UM Capital Regional	260
Howard Co. Medical Center	258
St. Agnes	256
Mercy Medical	256
Adventist Ft. Washington	249
Western Maryland Regional	244
MedStar Good Sam	237
Anne Arundel Medical Center	235
GBMC	230
UM Midtown	228
Meritus	227
UM Charles Regional	225
Suburban	222
Carroll	215
Adventist Shady Grove	214
MedStar Union	214
MedStar Montgomery	213
Calverthealth Med Center	210
UM Harford	205
MedStar Harbor	198
Sinai	183
Tidal Health Peninsula Regional	175
UM Shore at Easton	174
UM Shore at Chestertown	173
Garrett Regional	147
Atlantic	131
average (mean)	246
average (median)	228

*Source: CMS Hospital Compare, 2/22/23

States of Similar Size to Maryland

State	Population	Largest cities	ED Wait time
Tennessee	6.9 MIL	Nashville 703,000	145 min.
		Memphis 628,000	
Indiana	6.8 MIL	Indianapolis 891,000	133 min.
Missouri	6.1 MIL	Kansas City 503,000	144 min.
Maryland	6.1 MIL	Baltimore 576,000	228 min.
Wisconsin	5.8 MIL	Milwaukee 569,000	136 min.
Colorado	5.8 MIL	Denver 711,000	140 min.
		Colorado Springs 483,000	
Minnesota	5.7 MIL	Minneapolis 425,000	129 min.

Data from CMS, US Census Bureau



HEALTHCARE ECONOMY

This State Has the Longest ER Waiting Time in America

Douglas A.

McIntyre

February 28, 2022 12:30 pm



The COVID-19 pandemic radically changed the way America’s hospitals work and the burden put on hospital staff, doctors and nurses. In hard-hit areas, intensive care bed availability disappeared. Occupancy of other hospital beds was also turned over to people who contracted the virus. Emergency rooms overflowed and people were in makeshift beds, in some cases for days. Hospitals began to lose key personnel because these people felt entirely overwhelmed or became infected.

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Emergency rooms have been the “front doors” to hospitals for years, particularly facilities that treated people without insurance or other means to cover medical expenses. The spread of COVID-19 undermined the ability to perform this function.

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Between the normal flow of emergency room cases and COVID-19 patients, some facilities have basically closed to anything other than the most severe cases.

According to research by IT service automation company SysAid, emergency room median waiting periods in all 50 states topped 100 hours over the period of the study that which ran from January 7, 2020, to March 31, 2021. That means it caught most of the serious inflows during the worst of the pandemic. The conclusions were based on Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services data.

The most notable conclusion of the study was that sparsely populated states had the shortest emergency room waiting times and crowded states had the longest. The state with the shortest waiting time was North Dakota at 104 minutes, followed by South Dakota at 113 and Nebraska at 114. The state with the longest waiting time was Maryland, the only state with an average wait time of more than 200 minutes.

These are the 20 states with the longest ER waiting times:

- Maryland (228 minutes)
- Delaware (195 minutes)
- Massachusetts (189 minutes)
- Rhode Island (185 minutes)
- New York (184 minutes)
- Arizona (176 minutes)
- New Jersey (173 minutes)
- Connecticut (166 minutes)
- California (164 minutes)
- Illinois (157 minutes)
- North Carolina (157 minutes)
- Oregon (157 minutes)
- Pennsylvania (157 minutes)

- Florida (155 minutes)
- New Hampshire (154 minutes)
- Virginia (154 minutes)
- Michigan (153 minutes)
- Kentucky (151 minutes)
- South Carolina (151 minutes)
- New Mexico (150 minutes)

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