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January 30, 2023

Senator Melony G. Griffith, Chair
Katherine A. Klausmeier, Vice-Chair
Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 108 Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits

Position: SUPPORT

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

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 108**.

Recent research from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health found that 1 in 5 Marylanders live in an area with a severe shortage of mental health providers. Their research also found that of those who experience mental illness in Maryland, 1 in 4 individuals report unmet treatment needs.

Research by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in 2021 found that 39.1% of adults in Maryland reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, and 31.3% were unable to obtain needed counseling or therapy. In addition, their research found that more than 16% of youth in the US between 6 and 17 had a mental health disorder, including more than 57,000 Maryland youth between 12 and 17 who were found to have depression.

Maryland's citizens, its communities, and employers will all benefit when every Marylander is able to have an annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visit to assess their mental health and refer to treatment, if appropriate. A significant first step would be requiring that health insurers include an annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visit in every health care policy.

Early intervention through an annual Behavioral Wellness Visit significantly reduces the likelihood of problems with work, family, school, and the onset of more significant mental health and substance use problems. Early intervention also reduces overall medical care costs.

The Maryland Psychological Association strongly supports SB 108 and asks that you report FAVORABLY on this bill.

Thank you for considering our comments. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Resnik, Psy.D.

Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

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