



January 31, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith  
Senate Finance Committee  
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support with Amendment – SB 108: Health Insurance – Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Coverage and Reimbursement

Dear Chair Griffith and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS supports Senate Bill 108: Health Insurance – Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Coverage and Reimbursement, but as discussed below, we will seek a clarifying amendment to the bill.

An annual behavioral health wellness visit (ABHWV) is an appointment with a mental health professional to assess and promote overall well-being. The visit may include a discussion of symptoms, stressors, mood, sleep patterns, substance use, and current life circumstances. The mental health professional may also provide education, coping strategies, and resources to improve mental health and prevent future issues.

An ABHWV aims to check in on a person's mental health and provide support and resources to help maintain or improve their well-being. During the visit, the mental health professional will likely ask questions about the person's current emotional state, stress levels, and behavior patterns. They may also provide recommendations and interventions to manage stress and anxiety, improve sleep, and promote healthy habits. This visit can help individuals identify potential mental health issues early on, allowing for prompt treatment and recovery.



MPS/WPS believes ABHWVs should be performed by a psychiatrist or collaborative care<sup>1</sup>. Therefore MPS/WPS asks the committee to consider the following amendment:

***On page 1, in line 3 after “VISIT” insert, “PERFORMED BY A PSYCHIATRIST OR VIA THE COLLABORATIVE CARE MODEL,”.***

With the adoption of the amendment above, MPS/WPS ask this committee for a favorable report on HB 162. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Legislative Action Committee

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<sup>1</sup> Collaborative care is a patient-centered model of care that aims to improve the coordination of care across multiple providers and settings. This can include primary care physicians, mental health specialists, case managers, and other healthcare professionals. The goal is to provide comprehensive, coordinated care that addresses the physical, psychological, and social needs of patients with mental health conditions.