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## **POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**BILL: HB1148 – Behavioral Health – Treatment and Access**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: February 24, 2023**

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB 1148.

The Mental Health Division of the Public Defender's Office represents clients in involuntary civil commitment cases and various proceedings related to findings of not criminally responsible. Last year we represented clients in over 10,000 matters. Many of our clients languish in emergency departments and in State and private psychiatric facilities because there are insufficient outpatient mental health treatment services available. Many of our clients cycle between the community and inpatient psychiatric hospitals because of the lack of community services available to them when they are discharged from inpatient hospitalizations. There are currently insufficient mental health treatment services available to individuals who voluntarily seek treatment.

There is a real need for a variety of robust community-based services across the State. HB 1148 is an important first step in creating accessible high-quality services.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1148.**

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**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division**

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