



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 30, 2023

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 527 – Fire, Rescue, or Emergency Medical Services Entities - Peer Support Programs – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 527 – Fire, Rescue, or Emergency Medical Services Entities - Peer Support Programs. SB 527 alters the definition of a peer support counseling program.

In 2022, House Bill 466 (2022) - Fire, Rescue, or Emergency Medical Services Entities - Peer Support Programs, established the Peer Support Counseling Program (Program) to provide counseling services from a peer support specialist to members of a fire, rescue, or emergency medical services entity. Health-General Article § 7.5–101 defines peer support services as “a set of nonclinical activities provided by individuals in recovery from mental disorders, substance-related disorders, or addictive disorders who use their personal, lived experiences and training to support other individuals with mental disorders, substance-related disorders, or addictive disorders from a peer support specialist.”¹ MDH supports altering the definition of “peer support counseling program,” specifically removing the term “counseling,” to appropriately and accurately reflect the program’s intended purpose.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

¹Md. Health-General Code Ann. § 7.5-101