

February 24, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Health & Government Operations Committee
Room 241 - House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support with Amendments – HB 1184: Behavioral Health Model for Maryland

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk 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 support with amendments House Bill 1148: Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland) (HB 1148) as a commission to make recommendations to provide appropriate, accessible, and comprehensive behavioral health services to individuals could be very beneficial to the State. Mental health and behavioral health issues affect a significant portion of our population, and access to quality care can be limited, particularly for individuals in underserved or marginalized communities.

A commission dedicated to improving behavioral health services could help identify gaps in existing services and make recommendations for improving access and quality of care. The Commission could also work to increase awareness of mental health issues and reduce the stigma that often surrounds seeking treatment. By providing comprehensive and accessible behavioral health services, the State could improve overall health outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and enhance the well-being of individuals and communities.

Finally, MPS/WPS believe that the perspective of a practicing psychiatrist could be beneficial to the Commission established under this bill and asks for the following amendment:

Amendment 1

On page 5, line 1 strike “.” and substitute “; (XX) ONE PHYSICIAN WHO PRACTICES PSYCHIATRY.”

With the above amendment adopted, MPS/WPS ask this committee for a favorable report on HB 82. If you have any questions concerning this testimony, please contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com .

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