

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Pamela Beidle

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: March 28, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 154 – *Public Health – Mental Health Advance Directives – Awareness and Statewide Database*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** Senate Bill 154.

A Mental Health Advance Directive (MHAD) is a legal document that enables an individual to provide their preferences/decisions for any future mental health care services they may need. A MHAD can outline preferred facilities, medications, or therapies the patient is willing to undergo and also an individual can designate a representative who is entrusted to make healthcare decisions on their behalf. Maryland created a statutory framework for MHADs because they support patient-centered care and have been proven to help deescalate a crisis faster while not causing further trauma and/or prevent a crisis altogether.

Senate Bill 154 requires the development of an awareness campaign to educate the public on what a MHAD is and to encourage the use of MHADs in the State. Despite the advantages of having this type of document in place prior to a mental health crisis, they are not widely used. In addition, the Behavioral Health Administration and the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) must conduct a study of how first responders and behavioral health crisis providers can access the advanced directives database developed by MHCC, in collaboration with the State-designated health information exchange when responding to a behavioral health crisis. Passage of Senate Bill 154 will advance the benefits of MHADs and improve response to behavioral health crises. A favorable report is requested.