



Date: 2/19/2024

To: Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier and The Finance Committee

Reference: Senate Bill 453 - Mental Health - Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

On behalf of LifeBridge Health, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 453.

LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County; Grace Medical Center (formerly Bon Secours Hospital), a freestanding medical facility in West Baltimore; and Center for Hope a center of excellence focused on provided hope and services for trauma survivors in Baltimore City.

My name is Yelena Gimelshteyn, MD. I am here today representing LifeBridge Health in support of Senate Bill 453 along with amendments offered by Secretary Herrera Scott.

As a psychiatrist, for over 11 years, I have walked alongside some of our most vulnerable citizens on their journeys through inpatient and outpatient psychiatric care. Many of these individuals grapple with severe mental illness and the complexities of adhering to treatment plans in the community. While we achieve significant progress within the structured, supportive environment of the hospital, often restoring patients to their baseline functioning, the true challenge lies in sustaining that progress upon their return to the community. The unfortunate reality is, many patients struggle with follow-up after discharge. They fall through the cracks of the outpatient system, neglecting their medication and care plans. This often leads to a heartbreaking regression, with patients returning months later in a drastically compromised state. Many arrive malnourished and near organ failure, having gone months without vital medication. Some sustain serious injuries from altercations, while others face legal repercussions for harming strangers, loved ones and caregivers. It's a devastating cycle, one we can break.

This is where Senate Bill 453, presents a solution to bridge this crucial gap, ensuring the hard-won gains made in the hospital are not lost upon reintegration into the community. I urge you to consider its immense potential and its ability to transform the lives of countless individuals battling severe mental illness.

For all the above stated reasons, I request a Favorable report for Senate Bill 453.

For more information, please contact:

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CARE BRAVELY