



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**Senate Bill 124 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement**

**Position: *Support***  
February 13, 2024  
Senate Finance Committee

**MHA Position**

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 124. More than 200,000 patients visit Maryland emergency departments (ED) seeking behavioral health services each year. Maryland hospitals care for everyone who comes through their doors, but too often patients in crisis visit hospital EDs due to a lack of behavioral health services in the community.

SB 124 would require the Maryland Medicaid Program and commercial insurers to provide coverage for annual behavioral health wellness visits. An annual behavioral health visit includes an assessment to determine whether a patient meets the criteria for a substance use or psychiatric disorder. The Medicaid Program and commercial insurers would also be required to reimburse providers for the behavioral health wellness visit at the same rate as an assessment that results in a behavioral health diagnosis.

The ongoing behavioral healthcare crisis in Maryland contributes to ED length of stay and hospital discharge challenges. When patients have access to these services in primary care settings, they can get the help they need at the onset of behavioral health conditions and stay out of crisis. This bill will improve the availability of behavioral health services and outcomes, keep people out of crisis, and decrease the number of unnecessary ED visits.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report on SB 124.

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