



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



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TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

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RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 124 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Coverage and Reimbursement*

On behalf of The Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 124.

Senate Bill 124 requires health insurance carriers to provide coverage for an annual behavioral health wellness visit, regardless of whether the assessment results in a behavioral health diagnosis. A carrier must also provide payment for the visit on the same basis and at the same rate as an assessment that results in a behavioral health diagnosis.

Senate Bill 124 advances the goals of the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, which prohibits discriminatory insurance coverage for those with mental health or substance abuse disorders. This bill continues to advance the goals of the federal Act and ensures that coverage and payment is equal in scope to physical health coverage. In addition, Senate Bill 124 also provides consumers with an additional, covered avenue to seek care early, which has been shown to lead to better health outcomes. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, in 2021, there were an estimated 57.8 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with a mental illness, with young adults aged 18-25 years with the highest prevalence compared to adults aged 26-49 years (28.1%) and aged 50 and older (15.0%). Senate Bill 124 is a needed coverage change to ensure that Maryland consumers have access to the health care, both physical and behavioral, that is needed. We urge a favorable vote.