



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair and
Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Natasha Mehu, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 14, 2024

RE: **HB 576 – Mental Health – Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary
Admission Procedures and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs**

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT HB 576**. This bill, among other changes, authorizes a peace officer to transport an individual subject to an emergency evaluation to a nearby emergency facility instead of nearest; and authorizes a psychiatric nurse practitioner to conduct the examine in addition to a physician.

HB 576 focuses on reforming the behavioral health system to ensure individuals who need services can get them. In addition to authorizing the establishment of Assisted Outpatient Treatment facilities, the bill makes improvements to the emergency transport of individuals needing services and seeks to reduce wait times for individuals to be examined. Often times, the nearest emergency facility is already overcrowded with patients. This means the individual in need of an emergency evaluation must wait an extended time, or the peace officer must be given authority to take the individual elsewhere. These situations already pose an increased risk of volatility, increasing the jeopardy of harm to both the officer and the subject in need of treatment. Once at a facility, if a physician is not available, the individual must wait again for services and if requested, the peace officer is required to stay with the individual until the evaluation takes place.

The changes proposed by HB 576 will streamline the process allowing individuals in need to be seen more quickly and create efficiencies for the peace officer. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT HB 576** and request a **FAVORABLE** Committee report.