

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee (Maryland Department of Health)

FROM: Andrew G. Vetter
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: March 6, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 1048 – *Behavioral Health Advisory Council and Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access – Alterations*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports with amendment** House Bill 1048.

House Bill 1048 alters the membership and terms of members of the Behavioral Health Advisory Council and requires the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access to meet jointly with the Council. The bill also requires the Council to make recommendations regarding the financing structure and quality oversight necessary to integrate somatic and behavioral health services in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program.

MedChi is supportive of the concept of taking a look at the current “carve out” of behavioral health services in Maryland and supports the position of the Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) regarding this matter. MedChi understands that MPS has submitted a package of amendments to this legislation; MedChi supports the MPS amendments. Further, MedChi supports MPS’s position that a model, which is most likely to adopt a culture of integration, is also the one that will most likely reduce avoidable costs and improve the health care of this population. Integrating administration and management of mental health and substance use disorder treatment into the rest of healthcare has been shown to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

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