



Maryland
Hospital Association

**House Bill 576- Mental Health – Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission
Procedures and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs**

Position: *Support*

February 14, 2024

House Health & Government Operations 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 House Bill 576.

With the dramatic decline in the number of psychiatric beds available to treat individuals with serious mental illness, rates of imprisonment of the mentally ill went up just as dramatically. Today, people who have been diagnosed with mental illness are six times more likely to be incarcerated than hospitalized.

Assisted outpatient treatment allows a judge to order certain people with serious mental health conditions to stay in up to one year of court-supervised treatment while they live in the community. It is arrest, incarceration only for a small subset of individuals with serious mental illness who have multiple episodes of homelessness, arrest, incarceration, or hospitalization that affect their ability to comply with treatment while living in the community.

Extensive research shows assisted outpatient treatment reduces homelessness, arrests, and hospitalizations by 70% and cuts cost to taxpayers by 50%. Assisted outpatient treatment works by compelling the recipient to receive specific treatment that will prevent their condition from worsening and by committing the mental health system to provide treatment.

We commend the Secretary of Health and Governor Moore for bringing this important issue forward.

For all of these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on HB 576.

For more information, please contact:
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