



February 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Health & Government Operations Committee
House Office Building – Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – House Bill 1155: Hospitals - Opioid Overdose - Medication-Assisted Treatment

Dear Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS support House Bill 1155: Hospitals - Opioid Overdose - Medication-Assisted Treatment. The Maryland Office of Overdose Response reports that 2,513 fatal overdoses occurred in Maryland from October 2022 to September 2023. In the previous twelve months to that, 2,549 fatal overdoses occurred in Maryland. Opioids were by far and away the primary driver of said overdoses. Also worth noting is that in the twelve months ending in September 2023, compared to the twelve months ending in September 2022, there were 1.2% fewer emergency medical services (EMS) naloxone administrations in Maryland, decreasing from 9,018 to 8,909. However, in the twelve months ending in September 2023, compared to the twelve months ending in September 2022, there were 6.5% more non-fatal, opioid-related hospital emergency department visits, increasing from 8,864 to 9,437.

The numbers are clear, opioid overdoses continue to be a significant public health concern for Maryland, with thousands of deaths still occurring each year. HB 1155 adds steps in the emergency treatment of opioid overdose to help prevent future overdoses, including outpatient treatment referrals that would get patients on suboxone or other medication-assisted treatment rather than being sent back out on the street to simply overdose again.

However, MPS/WPS will note that this Honorable Committee should be aware of the reality of the treatment tableau. While an admirable goal, HB 1155 is trying to mandate that hospitals do something that is not in their full control. Access to outpatient medications for opioid use disorder clinics is difficult, and frequently, clinics require an admission interview prior to



accepting the patient. So, patients may be started on medications that outpatient providers will refuse to continue, or outpatient providers will provide with significant delay. Furthermore, HB 1155 may have some unintended consequences, such as ERs becoming even more de facto treatment centers than they already are.

Therefore, for all the reasons above and with the aforementioned warnings acknowledged, MPS/WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 1155. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee