



January 23, 2024

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

RE: Support – House Bill 400: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement

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/WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS supports House Bill 400: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits - Coverage and Reimbursement (HB 400). An annual behavioral health wellness visit (ABHWV) is an appointment with a health care practitioner to assess and promote an individual's overall well-being. The visit may include a discussion of symptoms, stressors, mood, sleep patterns, substance use, and current life circumstances. The health care practitioner may also provide education, coping strategies, and resources to improve mental health and prevent future issues. This visit can help individuals identify potential mental health issues early on, allowing for prompt treatment, referral to a more specialized practitioner, and thus quicker recovery. The importance of an ABHWV cannot be understated and should be reimbursed as part of an individual's insurance coverage, which HB 400 mandates.

Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 400. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

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