



March 19, 2024

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

RE: Support – Senate Bill 217: Health Insurance – Conformity with Federal Law

Dear Chair 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 strongly support Senate Bill 217: Health Insurance – Conformity with Federal Law (SB 217) as amended. The inclusion of emergency mental health or substance use disorder services under the No Surprises Act aligns with the broader goals of the legislation to protect consumers from surprise bills, promote fair billing practices, and ensure access to essential healthcare services during emergencies. Mental health or substance use emergencies can be unpredictable, and individuals may not have the ability to choose in-network providers during such crises. SB 217 would, therefore, ensure that individuals are protected from unexpected and potentially high out-of-network bills during urgent mental health situations.

Furthermore, the inclusion of emergency mental or substance use health services encourages healthcare providers and insurers to maintain sufficient networks of mental health professionals and substance use disorder treatment providers who can respond to emergencies. This helps ensure that individuals in crisis have access to timely and appropriate mental health and substance use disorder care without the fear of unexpected financial burdens.

Finally, including emergency mental or substance use health services from the No Surprises Act could avoid financial barriers that discourage individuals from seeking immediate help during mental health emergencies. Including these services promotes a culture of accessibility and reduces the stigma associated with mental health care.



Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 217 as amended. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

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