



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Pamela Beidle

February 7, 2025

Senate Bill 0448 Public Health - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Self-Directed Mental Health Services - Pilot Program

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0448 Public Health - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Self-Directed Mental Health Services - Pilot Program.

MRHA supports this legislation establishing the Self-Directed Mental Health Services Pilot Program in the Maryland Department of Health. This program will facilitate access to clinically appropriate, person-centered, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed self-directed services to recipients of services under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program.

All Maryland residents deserve access to comprehensive mental health services, regardless of where in the state they live. Although the prevalence of mental health disorders in rural areas is comparable to that of urban areas, individuals in rural areas receive mental health treatment less frequently, and often with providers with less specialized training, compared to those in urban areas. Legislation such as SB 0448 presents the possibility of minimizing these disparities and providing rural residents with access to care on par with their urban dwelling counterparts.

MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we urge you to support its passage.

On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,

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