

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



February 10, 2025

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The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support –House Bill 743: Public Health - Health Care Quality Fund for Community-Based Behavioral Health Programs - Establishment

Dear Chairwoman 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 1100 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) strongly supports House Bill 743, which establishes the Health Care Quality Fund for Community-Based Behavioral Health Programs in the Maryland Department of Health to provide funding for training, grant awards, demonstration projects, or other purposes designed to improve behavioral health care services in the State. As we work to continue to bolster our continuum of community behavioral health services, it remains evident that our capacity to build the system of care is tenuous due to limited funding. Cuts to reimbursement rates in combination with higher salary requirements for mental health clinicians result in a financial gap that jeopardizes the viability of all service arms. Alternative sources of support, including grant funding, are critical to creating and sustaining community behavioral health programs to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Although the source of funding for the Health Care Quality Fund for Community-Based Behavioral Health Program is an area of concern, it is good to see that it is being proposed that the funds be reinvested back into behavioral health services

For these reasons, the Maryland Psychiatric Society urges a favorable report on HB 743.

If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact MPS lobbyist, Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

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