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February 11, 2025

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

RE: Support – HB 1289: Drug and Alcohol Treatment Programs - Discharge of Patients and Referral Services - Standards

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.

MPS/WPS support House Bill 1289: Drug and Alcohol Treatment Programs - Discharge of Patients and Referral Services – Standards (HB 1289). This bill represents a pragmatic and compassionate approach to ensuring the well-being of individuals undergoing treatment for addiction. HB 1289 prioritizes patient welfare by establishing standards for discharge from treatment programs that are aligned with the patient's mental health or substance use disorder diagnosis. This measure helps prevent premature discharge and ensures that patients receive appropriate follow-up care, reducing the risk of relapse and promoting positive outcomes. Additionally, HB 1289 addresses the issue of housing instability by prohibiting discharge if a patient is at risk of homelessness or residing in a homeless shelter without suitable care. By requiring referral to halfway houses or recovery residences, the bill acknowledges the complex needs of individuals in recovery and provides essential support to prevent them from falling through the cracks. Furthermore, HB 1289 mandates the referral and facilitation of entry into various support services beyond addiction treatment. These services encompass physical and mental health care, employment assistance, legal representation, family support, and education opportunities, contributing to the overall well-being and stability of patients in recovery. By supporting this bill, Maryland can make significant strides toward improving outcomes for individuals struggling with addiction in our community.

We therefore ask for a favorable report of HB 1289. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

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