

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



January 25, 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

Dear Delegate Pena-Melnyk:

RE: Support With Amendments – HB32: Forensic Review Board and Community Forensic Aftercare Program

Dear Delagete Pena-Melnyk:

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.

Previously, a Community Forensic Aftercare Program kept track of insanity acquittees in the community and all incompetent criminal defendants in state hospitals. However, over time this was folded into the new Office of Court-Ordered Evaluations and Placements. This bill aims to separate these functions out again. We feel that this is generally a good idea, because it requires the new CFAP to review each person on conditional release every 90 days. However, we do feel that some amendments would make this bill stronger. Therefore, the MPS/WPS would like to propose the following amendments to HB32:

SUBTITLE 55. COMMUNITY FORENSIC AFTERCARE PROGRAM

C 1: The program shall monitor committed persons on conditional release in accordance with their court-approved conditions of release.

C 2: delete - "Clinical Decisions" is too vague and open to interpretation

D 1: At least annually, a community forensic aftercare monitor shall hold a meeting to review the committed persons compliance with conditional release and clinical progress.

In summary we feel as though routine review of those out on conditional release may prevent violations and hospital warrants, which could lighten inpatient loads at state hospitals. As such, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB32 with our proposed amendments. 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