

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



February 11, 2025

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

RE: Support – HB 962: Public Health - Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients

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.

Hospitals are not designed for long term stays, especially for children. Prolonged hospitalization can negatively impact their emotional, social and educational development. A safe residential placement allows them to grow in a more nurturing environment. Keeping children in hospitals longer than needed, takes up valuable medical resources such as beds and staff, that could be used for acute care patients who need immediate medical attention. Many families struggle with the emotional and financial burden of having their child hospitalized for an extended period. Laws that ensure safe residential placement can ease this burden by providing stable alternatives. Some children may fall through the cracks and be placed in institutions rather than in family-like settings that promote their well-being and independence. It is more expensive to treat medically stable children in hospital settings than least restrictive environments. Appropriate resources should be put in place to ensure that children who are no longer in need of acute medical care, can be transferred to less expensive, lower level of care that meets their needs.

As such, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 962. 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

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