



Health and Government Operations Committee

SB 43 – Maryland Department of Health-Forensic Review Board-Established

March 26, 2025

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. Using their experience as parents, caregivers, and other loved ones, our staff provide emotional support, resource connection, systems navigation, support groups, and educational training and workshops.

MCF supports SB 43 – Maryland Department of Health - Forensic Review Board and Community Forensic Aftercare Program - Established. This bill will establish in statute the forensic review board process and community forensic aftercare program currently in place across Maryland. Providing statutory definitions and guidelines will ensure transparency and best practices across all of Maryland's state hospitals.

Maryland state facilities have used forensic review boards as part of the discharge planning process for many years for individuals found not criminally responsible. The process, however, not been defined in statute and is inconsistent across facilities. There have been reports of individuals who are clinically cleared for discharge from the facility who are denied by the review board without any explanation. A statutory standard for transparency in decision making will ensure that every person is treated fairly and that the discharge process is consistent and timely.

This legislation is a commonsense initiative to standardize the process for release from state psychiatric facilities. **We urge the Senate Finance Committee to support SB 43.**