

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



January 27, 2025

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January 27, 2025

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Judiciary Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – HB309: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Agencies - Peer Support Programs

Dear Chairman Clippinger 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 HB309 because it would allow peer support personnel to provide emotional and psychological support services to law enforcement professionals in a confidential manner while also allowing for disclosure of privileged information under certain circumstances. Police officers or other law enforcement professionals must be trained in peer support skills and educated about their obligations under the bill, thus raising practice requirements to those similarly required of licensed mental health professionals. Ensuring confidentiality will increase the likelihood that law enforcement professionals suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or depression will seek needed care.

For all the reasons stated above, MPS/WPS ask this committee for a favorable report on HB309. 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