



**S.B. 205: Health Insurance – Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders –
Codification of Federal Requirements
Senate Finance Committee Hearing
January 28, 2026
Favorable**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 205, which would codify federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act protections to continue to ensure Marylanders can access affordable mental health and substance use disorder care. We thank you for introducing this bill with the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA), and we request a favorable report.

The Legal Action Center (LAC) is a non-profit law and policy organization that fights discrimination, builds health equity, and restores opportunities for people with substance use disorders, arrest and conviction records, and HIV/AIDS. LAC convenes the Maryland Parity Coalition and works with its partners to ensure non-discriminatory access to mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) services through enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (Parity Act), robust network adequacy standards and enforcement, and other consumer protections.

We commend the Maryland General Assembly for passing a law in 2024 strengthening reporting requirements for health plans under the Parity Act. Shortly afterward, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health & Human Services, and Treasury issued new Parity Act regulations with strong protections to ensure consumers can get meaningful, non-discriminatory coverage for MH and SUD care. However, in January 2025, a lawsuit was filed against the federal government over these regulations.¹ In response, the Trump Administration issued a non-enforcement policy,² consistent with its current priorities regarding civil rights and anti-discrimination protections, and indicated it may rescind or revise the 2024 federal regulations. As such, Maryland needs to codify these requirements so that we do not roll back equitable access to lifesaving MH and SUD treatment.

Importantly, the 2024 federal regulations are the current standards that carriers are already following and the MIA is already enforcing. S.B. 205 does not impose any new requirements on carriers, it merely protects Marylanders in case these rules are weakened by the federal administration. This is critically important, as Maryland is still losing far too many lives to overdose and suicide in the midst of the ongoing overdose public health emergency and MH crisis. We must preserve non-discriminatory access to MH and SUD care so that lifesaving care is affordable, accessible, and equitable.

Thank you,
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¹ <https://litigationtracker.law.georgetown.edu/litigation/10478/>

² <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ebsa/laws-and-regulations/laws/mental-health-parity/statement-regarding-enforcement-of-the-final-rule-on-requirements-related-to-mhpaea>