



MARYLAND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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February 20, 2026

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Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair
Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: Senate Bill 550 – Health Care Decisions Act – Surrogate Decision-Making – Mental Disorders

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), we are pleased to express our support for **Senate Bill 550. SB 550** appropriately updates Maryland’s Health Care Decisions Act by repealing the current prohibition that prevents a surrogate from authorizing treatment for a mental disorder when an individual has been certified as incapable of making an informed decision. As proposed, SB 550 permits authorized surrogates to make behavioral health treatment decisions while maintaining existing safeguards requiring that decisions reflect the patient’s wishes or best interests.

This reform promotes parity between physical and mental health care decision-making and addresses a significant gap in Maryland law that can delay necessary treatment for individuals experiencing serious psychiatric impairment.

From a clinical and public health perspective, individuals with severe mental disorders may temporarily lose decisional capacity during acute episodes of illness, yet timely treatment is often critical to stabilize symptoms, prevent deterioration, and reduce risks to health and safety. Current law allows surrogate decision-making for general medical treatment but prohibits such authorization for mental health treatment, creating an artificial distinction that is inconsistent with modern standards of integrated health care. SB 550 appropriately recognizes mental disorders as medical conditions requiring the same continuity of care protections afforded to other health conditions, while preserving important safeguards regarding patient preferences, prognosis, and personal values in surrogate decision-making.

SB 550 represents a thoughtful and balanced policy change that strengthens patient protections, supports continuity of care, and promotes timely access to clinically necessary treatment for vulnerable individuals who lack decisional capacity. By aligning Maryland’s health care decision framework with contemporary behavioral health practice, the legislation advances patient welfare, reduces barriers to treatment, and supports families and clinicians in responding appropriately during periods of psychiatric crisis. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue

For these reasons, the **Maryland Psychological Association respectfully urges a favorable report on SB550**. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of MPA’s Legislative Committee, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
President

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs