



Senate Finance Committee

Date: February 24, 2026

SB 707 – Mental Health Law – Danger to the Life or Safety of the Individual or of Others – Definition (Right to Treatment)

Position: Favorable with Amendment

Dear Chair, Beidle, and Members of the Finance Committee,

On behalf of LifeBridge Health, one of Maryland's largest local nonprofit health system I write in support of Senate Bill 707, which would provide a clear statutory definition of what it means for an individual with a mental disorder to pose a *danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others* for purposes of involuntary admission and emergency evaluation under Maryland's mental health law. A precise statutory definition is essential to ensure consistent application by clinicians, law enforcement, and courts, and to reduce unnecessary variation that can lead to delayed care or inappropriate diversion of individuals who need treatment.

Maryland hospitals and behavioral health providers routinely assess individuals presenting with acute psychiatric needs. A clear statutory standard for "danger" helps clinicians and multidisciplinary teams make critical decisions in high-stress situations with consistency and medico-legal confidence. SB 707 continues the fundamental balance in Maryland law — that involuntary admission and treatment may be initiated when a person, because of a mental disorder, poses a significant risk to themselves or others and *less restrictive alternatives* have been considered. A legally grounded definition reduces subjective interpretation that can lead to either over- or under-utilization of inpatient care.

Under existing statute, "danger to life or safety" is a critical criterion for involuntary hospitalization and emergency evaluations. However, without a statutory definition, clinicians may apply inconsistent thresholds when evaluating similar presentations across facilities. **LifeBridge Health supports the State's efforts to create clarity regarding the dangerousness standards and suggests aligning the definition to Health General §10–708(3)(iii) essential needs or health and safety to have better alignment and standardization for clinicians.**

Individuals subject to involuntary processes retain important rights and procedural protections under Maryland law. Providing a definition of "danger" reinforces those protections by limiting the subjective discretion and enhancing transparency for patients, families, providers, and the judiciary.

SB 707 represents a crucial step in modernizing Maryland's mental health law. By defining a key statutory concept relevant to hospital and emergency evaluations, this bill improves clarity, supports consistent clinical decision-making, and strengthens protections for individuals with mental health needs. **For these reasons, LifeBridge Health urges favorable report for SB 707 with the recommended amendment reference above.**

Respectfully,

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