



February 20, 2026
Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair
Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

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

Position: OPPOSE

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

On behalf of the Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), we request an **unfavorable report on SB 707**. Senate Bill 707 expands the definition of “danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others” to include a substantial risk of harm **whether or not the risk is imminent and to encompass predictions that an individual may engage in conduct resulting in criminal justice involvement**. While the bill seeks to broaden access to treatment, and we support the intent of SB 707, its proposed definition departs significantly from longstanding clinical and legal standards governing involuntary admission. Current Maryland law appropriately requires evidence of a present and clinically supported risk tied to an individual’s current condition. This focus on current dangerousness reflects well-established principles that involuntary confinement must be based on demonstrable, immediate need rather than speculative future risk.

The bill asks mental health practitioners to make determinations that exceed the limits of clinical science and professional reliability. Mental health practitioners cannot confidently assess an individual who may present a risk of harm to others when that risk is not imminent. *Likewise, predicting that an individual is at substantial risk of engaging in conduct that will result in criminal justice involvement is inherently uncertain and not a clinically valid standard for involuntary psychiatric intervention.* The prediction of future behavior—particularly distant or non-imminent behavior—remains highly unreliable, even under structured assessment methods, and becomes increasingly speculative as the timeframe expands. Expanding the definition of dangerousness beyond imminent risk therefore creates a standard that cannot be applied consistently or reliably by clinicians. Existing law already provides mechanisms to address individuals who present a current danger to themselves or others or who are unable to protect their own safety. These standards appropriately balance the need for treatment with the protection of individual liberty.

At the same time, the **Maryland Psychological Association supports the principle reflected in §10–601(C)(3), lines 10–13**, which addresses circumstances in which an individual is unable to provide for basic needs—including food, clothing, shelter, medical care, self-protection, or safety—to such a degree as to create a substantial risk of serious bodily harm, serious illness, or death. This standard reflects a clinically recognizable condition associated with severe mental illness and functional incapacity and is consistent with established legal and clinical frameworks governing involuntary intervention. The focus on an individual’s current functioning and ability to meet essential needs provides a more objective and clinically grounded basis for intervention while appropriately protecting both public safety and individual welfare.

For these reasons, the **Maryland Psychological Association respectfully urges an unfavorable report on SB707**. 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 mpalegislativecommittee@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