



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Pam Beidle, Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 17, 2026

RE: **SB 490 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization – Prescription Drugs to Treat Serious Mental Illness**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 490**. This bill prohibits prior authorization requirements, step therapy protocols, and fail–first protocols for prescription drugs used to treat individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI).

Law enforcement witnesses firsthand the devastating effect untreated or undertreated mental illness has on individuals, families, and communities. When individuals with serious mental illness are unable to access needed medications timely due to administrative barriers, they are more likely to cycle through the criminal justice system, emergency departments, and shelters.

This legislation is a critical step to ensure individuals with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder receive care without delay. Removing barriers and providing easier access to needed medications will:

- reduce interactions with law enforcement and the courts, allowing officers to focus on public safety rather than crisis intervention;
- decrease homelessness as untreated mental illness is a leading cause of housing instability;
- improve patient outcomes, including medication adherence, stability, and long-term recovery; and
- support public safety by reducing the number of psychiatric emergencies that escalate into criminal incidents.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 490** and urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report.

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