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Workgroup on Behavioral Health Rate Methodology Modernization – Establishment

Senate Bill 39

Senate Finance Committee

March 3, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) strongly supports Senate Bill 39 because Maryland's Behavioral Health rate-setting process needs to be independent, transparent, and grounded in the real-world experience of the providers delivering care every day. We understand the sponsor has amendments to make the bill become a crossfile of House Bill 772, and we support that effort. When rates do not reflect the actual cost of providing services, access suffers, workforce pressures increase, and the State's broader Behavioral Health goals become harder to achieve.

SB 39 creates a clear, data-driven pathway to modernize that process. MATOD respectfully urges a favorable report. Maryland law has required an independent, cost-driven rate study for Community Behavioral Health services since 2017. That work is now underway, and we appreciate that the Department has moved it forward. However, SB 39 strengthens the process in two important ways:

1. **It formalizes meaningful provider participation.** Consultation is not the same as participation. Providers need a defined seat at the table when methodology is being shaped, cost drivers are being identified, and implementation options are being evaluated. On paper, many policy ideas look reasonable. In practice, they can unintentionally destabilize outpatient systems. SB 39 ensures that operational realities are part of the analysis from the start.

2. **It ensures independence and transparency.** Rate-setting directly affects whether providers can sustain services and whether Marylanders can access care. Housing this work within an independent structure at MHCC adds an important layer of objectivity and public accountability. That independence strengthens confidence in the final recommendations, regardless of where the data ultimately leads.

Outpatient Behavioral Health providers are the backbone of Maryland's Mental Health and Addiction treatment system.

Modernizing methodology is not about inflating rates. It is about aligning payment with the actual cost of delivering evidence-based outpatient care and creating a process that providers and the State can both trust. HB 772 builds on existing rate study efforts and establishes guardrails to ensure the work is collaborative, independent, and implementable.

For these reasons, MATOD respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 772.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.

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