

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



February 17, 2026

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The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Support: SB 550: Health Care Decisions Act - Surrogate Decision Making - Mental Disorders

Dear Chairwoman Beidle & Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS/WPS represent over 1200 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS support Senate Bill 550: Health Care Decisions Act - Surrogate Decision Making - Mental Disorders. Under this bill, patients who are unable to express a choice about mental health care will be able to receive it. This would cover patients who are not explicitly refusing or objecting but can't weigh choices or express a preference. Before a surrogate can act, two physicians (or a physician and an NP) must examine the patient and fill out a certificate of incapacity.

This bill would not replace or conflict with existing involuntary treatment laws which apply only to patients who explicitly refuse care. Those patients would still require a clinical review panel and/or civil commitment process. As such, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 550.

If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact MPS lobbyist, Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society & Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee