



*MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.*

**SB 490 SUPPORT**

Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization - Prescription Drugs to Treat Serious Mental Illness

Senate Finance Committee

February 17, 2026

**A therapeutic trial of a medication for mood disorders often takes 6-8 weeks before its effectiveness can be evaluated. Starting at low doses and slowly titrating can improve tolerability and compliance, but makes the evaluation period even longer.**

Encouraging consistent adherence to stigmatized mental health medications is a well-known challenge. **Non-adherence to psychotropic medications is highly correlated with utilization of high-cost care in emergency departments and hospitals.**

When a patient stabilized on a medical regimen is required to discontinue it, **consequences can be severe. An exacerbation of depression or bipolar symptoms can be disruptive or dangerous.** Patients stabilized in an in-patient facility may need to switch medications at a period of vulnerability, soon after hospital discharge.

Barriers to care is already a significant problem for people with serious mental illness. These changes would go a long way to reducing these barriers.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Joseph A. Adams, MD, Co-Chair, MDDCSAM Public Policy Committee.