



March 31, 2026

**House Health Committee
LETTER OF INFORMATION**

*SB 707 - Mental Health Law - Danger to the Life or Safety of the Individual or of Others and Reports on
Emergency Evaluation Petitions (Right to Treatment)*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

BHSB appreciates the opportunity to provide information on SB 707 - Mental Health Law - Danger to the Life or Safety of the Individual or of Others and Reports on Emergency Evaluation Petitions (Right to Treatment). This bill would set a new and more expansive definition of dangerousness to be used when evaluating whether an individual satisfies the requirements for an emergency petition (EP) for psychiatric hospitalization. The amended version also establishes critical reporting requirements on the EP process.

As amended, the bill establishes an expanded definition, but it is narrower than the original bill. The most significant remaining expansion is under subsection (2), adding an inability to provide for one’s basic needs as a type of danger to oneself. It is not clear to BHSB that the proposed expansion of the definition will result in improved care for individuals with serious mental illness. The proposed language also includes an important qualifier that a lack of basic needs due to indigence should not be considered during an EP. MDH must ensure that this aspect is understood and interpreted consistently by the stakeholders involved in the EP process should this pass.

The introduction of this bill follows efforts from a 2021 workgroup on involuntary commitment. That workgroup recommended improving training on when an EP is appropriate and expanding publicly available data on EPs. Neither of these recommendations have been implemented. It is challenging to make decisions about reforms to the EP process without data on current practice.

The amended bill does include robust reporting requirements. These requirements are critical to better understanding involuntary commitment in Maryland and are a very welcome addition. They are especially essential should this pass so the state can monitor the implications of the change to the definition. **We urge the House Health Committee to retain these reporting requirements in any bill that may pass.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the bill as amended.

***For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142 or
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