



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.

HB 808 SUPPORT

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

Health 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.