

Senate Bill 707 Mental Health Law – Definition of Danger to the Life or Safety of the Individual or of Others and Reports on Emergency Evaluation Petitions (Right to Treatment)

House Health Committee

March 31, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE AS AMENDED

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 707 with the Senate amendments.

As amended, SB 707 defines “danger to the life or safety of the individual or others” for purposes of an emergency psychiatric evaluation and involuntary commitment to a psychiatric facility and requires the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to publish annual reports on the use of petitions for emergency evaluation.

MHAMD appreciates the sponsor’s willingness to work on compromise language that more closely aligns the definition in SB 707 with the standard agreed to by stakeholders after a lengthy BHA review process in 2021.¹ As amended, this definition will provide clarity for the legal process, clinicians, first responders and families seeking emergency treatment, without subjecting an overly broad portion of Maryland’s population to involuntary commitment based on a non-imminent risk of potential future psychiatric/substantial deterioration.

Importantly, SB 707 as amended also requires the state to publish annual data reports on the use of emergency petitions. This was another key recommendation from the 2021 stakeholder report.² It will ensure any future policy decisions around the use of involuntary commitment will be informed by a comprehensive understanding of who is being impacted, why these petitions are being filed, how they are enforced, and the results of their use.

For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 707 as amended and urges a favorable report.

¹ Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration. [Involuntary Commitment Stakeholders’ Workgroup Report](#) at pg. 14. September 11, 2021.

² Id.