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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE



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The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

House Bill 1563 – Emergency Room Services and Post–Acute Care – Coverage and Facility Studies

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Vice–Chair and members of the Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 1563.

As this committee is well aware, Maryland's emergency room wait times are among the longest in the country. In 2024, the General Assembly enacted legislation to establish the Maryland Emergency Department Wait Time Reduction Commission (Wait Time Reduction Commission) to address factors throughout the health care system that contribute to increased Emergency Department wait times. The Commission submitted an annual report in November 2025. Among the report's key findings is the significant impact of post-acute care shortages in both long-term care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities on delaying discharges. The report also found that data fragmentation across acute, post-acute, and community settings hampers system coordination and policy design.

Two of the Wait Time Reduction Commission's selected priorities are standardizing bed capacity and occupancy metrics and improving post–acute access.

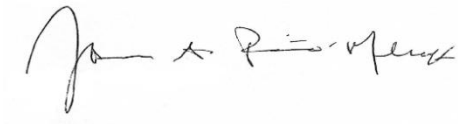
House Bill 1563 addresses the standardization of metrics by requiring the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) and the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) to conduct a study to quantify the State's bed capacity in post–acute care settings and in hospitals and make recommendations for a collection and auditing process through which hospital and post–acute beds are reported to MHCC and HSCRC each year. The bill addresses access to post–acute services by requiring MHCC and HSCRC to conduct a study analyzing options to facilitate clinically appropriate transitions from acute to post–acute care settings. The findings of both studies are due to the Senate Finance Committee and House Health Committee by January 1, 2027. Access to post–acute services is also addressed in the bill by requiring insurance carriers to include in MIA's annual appeals and grievances summary report, data on adverse decisions related to admissions to skilled nursing facilities and inpatient rehabilitation facilities.

Finally, the bill addresses the impact of insurance denials on emergency room utilization by prohibiting an individual, group, or blanket policy or contract issued in the State by an insurer, a nonprofit health service plan, or a health maintenance organization from denying a covered emergency room service solely on the basis that the insured or enrollee did not experience an emergency medical condition. I am aware that the League of Life and Health Insurers of

Maryland is opposed to this provision of the bill but I look forward to working with them to reach consensus on clarifying insurance coverage of emergency room services in the State.

House Bill 1563 will compliment and inform the work of the Emergency Wait Time Reduction Commission and assist the State in our continued efforts to provide timely health care in the most appropriate setting. I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke.

Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk