



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 3, 2023

To: The Honorable Cory McCray, Senate Health & Human Services Subcommittee

Re: Letter of Support- MDH Behavioral Health Administration

Dear Chair McCray and members of the HHS Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the MDH Behavioral Health Administration budget. Hospital emergency departments (ED) are often the only provider available for Marylanders in a behavioral health crisis. Emergency department visits for behavioral health needs has steadily risen, and in 2021, nearly 20% of all patients in an ED had a behavioral health condition.

MHA strongly supports investments in the entire behavioral health continuum of care. However, ensuring access to services in the community for individuals in behavioral health crisis is imperative. One night in February there were over 115 patients boarding in emergency departments waiting for a psychiatric bed. These patients could have been better served before reaching a crisis point.

Maryland hospitals support state investments in behavioral health and crisis care, including:

- Maryland's move to 9-8-8, the 9-8-8 trust fund, and efforts to ensure the crisis continuum are fully funded
- Health Services Cost Review Commission investments through Regional Partnership Catalyst Grant programs
- Community Health Resources Commission, which manages the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to support behavioral health care for children in school
- Maryland Medicaid program's move to increase reimbursement for crisis intervention services

This funding has merit, but there is a need for coordination across state agencies to ensure the funds meet Marylanders' needs and improve behavioral health outcomes. This is evident in the percentage of emergency department visits for those in behavioral health crisis. The Administration and legislative leadership prioritized behavioral health care. MHA stands ready to work with these leaders and other stakeholders to continue to improve Maryland's system of care, beginning with making sure care can be accessed before the ED.

For more information, please contact:
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