



Maryland
Hospital Association

House Bill 1274 – Opioid Restitution Fund

Position: *Support*

Bill Summary

HB 1274 would establish the Opioid Restitution Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund; specify the purpose of the fund; require the state treasurer to hold the fund, and the comptroller to account for the fund; specify the contents of the fund; specify the purpose for which the fund may be used; provide for the investment of money in and expenditures from the fund; require interest earnings of the fund to be credited to the fund; and more.

MHA Position

Under Maryland's new Total Cost of Care agreement with the federal government, Maryland's hospitals are working to lower costs and improve population health. In addition to treating illness and injury, hospitals are reaching out beyond their four walls to keep people well and improve the health of the communities they serve. The result: hospitals are taking care of the whole person, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors that influence people's health, including behavioral health.

Maryland's hospitals have been on the frontlines of the behavioral health crisis, because individuals with severe mental illness or in psychiatric crisis, often fueled by opioid addiction, repeatedly seek help in hospital emergency departments. In 2017, the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) Behavioral Health Task Force [*Roadmap for an Essential, Comprehensive System of Behavioral Health Care for Maryland*](#) reported that, from 2013 to 2016, emergency department visits by people with behavioral health needs jumped by 18.5 percent, while all other emergency department visits dropped by more than 8 percent.

Maryland's hospitals therefore support HB 1274. By establishing a fund into which any court settlements from opioid manufacturers and others would be used for behavioral health purposes, the bill goes a long way toward helping the state address the longstanding and continuing behavioral health crisis, including the destructive effects of opioid abuse. Key to that work is ensuring that these patients get the right care, at the right time, in the right place, which often means a community health provider rather than a hospital emergency department.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a *favorable* report.