



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 18, 2021

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Support with Amendment - House Bill 903 - Task Force to Study the Maryland Public Guardianship Program

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 903.

It is critical to establish a process for public guardianship that is efficient and respectful of an individual's rights. A long, drawn out process harms patients. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, courts transitioned to virtual hearings, and some patients were left in hospital beds, unable to transfer to the next level of care because they were waiting for a guardianship determination. Delayed guardianship determinations is a long-term issue, yet hospitals feel the impact even more so during COVID. When hospitals needed to maximize bed capacity, delays adversely impacted patients who were ready for discharge and acutely ill patients in need of care.

HB 903 would establish a task force to examine Maryland's public guardianship program, analyze laws in other states and make recommendations for improvement. Several task forces and work groups, convened by the judiciary and legislature, helped address problems with Maryland's public guardianship program, but there is more work to do.

Maryland hospitals support convening a new task force to review the lessons learned and approach this issue with a fresh perspective. To ensure there is representation from hospitals—where patients often languish awaiting guardianship determinations, **we recommend adding a hospital representative to the task force.**

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of this amendment and look forward to working with stakeholders to address needed improvements to Maryland's Public Guardianship Program.

For more information, please contact:
Erin Dorrien, Director, Government Affairs & Policy
Edorrien@mhaonline.org