



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdCSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: February 9, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 286 – *Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdCSWC, we **support** Senate Bill 286.

Senate Bill 286 both increases and extends funding for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program, which is a key component of Maryland's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System. Senate Bill 286 also includes important requirements for crisis response services that will serve to minimize law enforcement interaction for individuals in crisis by expanding the use of 24/7 mobile crisis teams, which is a team including a licensed mental health professional and peer support specialist, to respond to people in crisis in the community, rather than having police respond. We are encouraged that the bill emphasizes the importance of providing connection to services and coordinating patient follow-up, to include peer support and family support services after stabilization.

A comprehensive framework of crisis response services significantly reduces preventable behavioral health crises and offers earlier intervention to stabilize crises more quickly and at the lowest level of care appropriate. Effective crisis response and follow-up coordination and connection to services decreases avoidable incarcerations, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and readmissions. Given the increasing incidence of mental health and substance use disorders due to COVID-19, enhancing Maryland's crisis response services is more important than ever. If we expect to meet the increased demand for behavioral health services, Senate Bill 286 is essential. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000

Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work: www.gwscsw.org

Contacts: Coalition Chair: Judy Gallant, LCSW-C; email: jg708@columbia.edu; mobile (301) 717-1004
Legislative Consultant: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer, Schwartz, Metz & Wise PA, 20 West Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Email: pmetz@smwpa.com; mobile (410) 746-9003