



Senate Bill 286

Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – Modifications

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance and Budget and Taxation Committees

Date: February 9, 2021

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 286. This bill will expand and strengthen the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program and foster the development of supportive resources for residents in such need.

Counties host various structures to serve residents with behavioral health needs – some within county government, others through a community-based non-governmental organization. Regardless of the specific means, counties are active partners in delivering services locally to those who need them. The existing Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program frames this relationship, and creates standards for grant applications.

SB 286 adds additional context, and funding, to this structure – both of which will be beneficial. The bill encourages “mobile crisis teams” as a best practice for rapid response, and manageably integrates them among the services that may be dispatched by a county 9-1-1 call center. The bill also encourages the use of resources other than law enforcement during many such crises – reducing the potential for negative interactions arising. Getting the right resources, and staff with the best-suited training, to such situations may yield better outcomes overall.

SB 286 recognizes the needs for our residents in mental health crises, and should help advance the use of mobile resources and non-law enforcement assistance in such troubled times. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 286 a **FAVORABLE** report.