



March 19, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
House Health & Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Oppose – SB 96: Public Health - Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities
- Safety and Community Relations Plans

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS oppose Senate Bill 96 (SB 96) as this bill reinforces stigma and unwarranted fear of individuals presenting with mental or other forms of illness by suggesting that every facility which treats these individuals must protect the community from them. In actuality, people with mental illness are at increased risk of violence and victimization from the community. Therefore, portraying a behavioral health treatment program as a source of danger will deter people from seeking treatment at that program. In addition, SB 96 may inadvertently create liability issues for the clinic for circumstances that are beyond their control and thus drive up the cost of mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

For these reasons, MPS and WPS respectfully ask the committee for an unfavorable report on SB 96. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett, Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee