



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

March 23, 2021

Senate Bill 96: Public Health – Behavioral Health Programs and Health Care Facilities –
Safety and Community Relations Plans

Written Testimony Only

POSITION: SUPPORT

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 96 as amended by the Senate Finance Committee and passed by the Senate. HFAM represents over 170 skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as nearly 80 associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction in the state.

HFAM members provide the majority of post-acute and long-term care to Marylanders in need: 6 million days of care across all payer sources annually, including more than 4 million Medicaid days of care and one million Medicare days of care. Thousands of Marylanders across the state depend on the high-quality services that our skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers offer every day.

Senate Bill 96 would require behavioral health programs to establish and implement a safety plan for the safety of individuals served by the behavioral health program. If a behavioral health program is required to be granted accreditation as a condition of licensure, and the accreditation organization requires the program to adopt a community relations plan, the program shall submit the community relations plan to the Administration. Before the Department approves the operation of a facility, including granting a license, the Department shall require the facility to establish and implement a safety plan and if the facility is accredited by an accreditation organization and required to establish a community relations plan, the facility must also establish and implement a community relations plan.

Skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers and assisted living campuses in Maryland have emergency and safety plans in place. In addition, they actively engage in community outreach and events such as Halloween celebrations, Thanksgiving turkey giveaways, Veterans Day events, Mother's and Father's Day gatherings, and even inauguration activities involving the community.

While appropriate and necessary COVID-19 infectious disease protocols have curtailed in-person activity, community relations professionals in our setting continue their work in the community with drive-thru and virtual events such as turkey giveaways and virtual Alzheimer's Association walks.

Community engagement is good for the health of all involved, is good for business, whether for- or not-for-profit, and it's simply just right thing to do.

For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 96 and request a favorable report from the Committee.

Submitted by:

Joseph DeMattos, Jr.

President and CEO

(410) 290-5132