



March 19, 2021

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

RE: Support – SB 520: Behavioral Health Services and Voluntary Placement Agreements - Children and Young Adults - Report Modifications

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 support Senate Bill 520: Behavioral Health Services and Voluntary Placement Agreements - Children and Young Adults - Report Modifications (SB 520) as this idea should provide a lot of useful information to the state, academics, health practitioners, and service providers. By wisely grouping data by race and ethnicity, this data will be especially helpful in showing whether significant differences exist among those groups of youth in Maryland.

For example, 2006 data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) suggested that the rates of adolescent past-month substance abuse among American Indians/Alaska Natives were 13.7%; for Blacks, 9.8%; for persons reporting two or more races, 8.9%; for non-Latino Whites, 8.5%; for Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, 7.5%; for Latinos, 6.9%; and for Asians, 3.6%. At that time, across all youth, 8.2%, or approximately 2.1 million youth, needed treatment for drug or alcohol use problems. Of these, only 181,000 (8.7%) received treatment at a specialty facility, suggesting a dramatic gap in the unmet need for SUD services.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 520. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3488852/>