

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Eric Ebersole

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: March 18, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 271 – *Public Safety – Law Enforcement Diversion Programs*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 271.

House Bill 271 authorizes the establishment of Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Programs (LEAD) in all jurisdictions in the State and requires the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention to collect data and provide an annual report on the programs that are established. MedChi supports the development of LEAD programs which will provide law enforcement officers with training and resources to be better equipped to deal with the wide range of mental, behavioral, and substance related issues which they encounter on a daily basis. LEAD programs grant law enforcement the discretionary authority to divert individuals whose law violations are driven by unmet behavior health needs to community-based case management programs in lieu of the normal criminal justice system pathway which often leads to incarceration. These case management programs to which these individuals are diverted provide a broad range of support services to maximize the opportunity to achieve behavioral change and reduce the number of individuals in the criminal justice system.

Passage of House Bill 271 will not only bolster existing LEAD programs but also encourage the development of new programs in other jurisdictions. It also provides a framework for the State to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of the programs so that there can be continued improvement of their effectiveness moving forward. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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