

February 5, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Finance Committee
3 East - Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 154: Public Health – Mental Health Advance Directives – Awareness and Statewide Database

Dear Chair Griffith 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 strive 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/WPS support Senate Bill 154: Public Health – Mental Health Advance Directives – Awareness and Statewide Database (SB 154). Mental health advance directives (MHADs) are legal documents that allow individuals to specify their preferences for mental health treatment in the event that they become unable to make decisions for themselves in the future. MHADs typically include a statement of an individual's values and beliefs and specific instructions for the type of treatment they would like to receive in the event of a mental health crisis. MHADs can be essential for ensuring that an individual's rights and preferences are respected and that they receive the most appropriate treatment possible.

MHADs are sometimes called "psychiatric advance directives" or "behavioral health advance directives." A person of sound mind can create them at a time when they are not in the midst of a mental health crisis. MHADs typically include information about an individual's past experiences with mental health treatment and their preferences for specific types of treatment or medications. They may also include instructions for who should be notified during a crisis and who should be involved in making treatment decisions.

A member of MPW/WPS provided the following anecdotal story about MHADs.

After one of my outpatients was hospitalized and his family was inappropriately brought into care, we worked to create an MHAD that would disclose who in his family could or should be contacted, which medications that he has used before that yielded poor outcomes, some of the symptoms of his illness that he typically experiences, history prior

treatment, etc. in case he is unable to verbalize them at the time and the team doesn't contact me (which they didn't, at his last hospitalization despite me calling numerous times). I think MH ADs can be really useful when completed with your mental health team, especially if a patient lives alone and does not have the ability to share family contact information.

In closing, MHADs can help reduce the stress and uncertainty associated with mental health crises and can be a valuable tool for empowering individuals to take control of their mental health care. They are also highly instructional and informative to those attempting to diagnose and provide treatment to an individual experiencing a mental health crisis. Such information will prevent unnecessary delays in treatment.

For the reasons stated above, MPS/WPS ask this committee for a favorable report on SB 154. 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