



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdcSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,300 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Pamela Beidle

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: March 28, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 154 – *Public Health – Mental Health Advance Directives – Awareness and Statewide Database*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdcSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,300 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdcSWC, we **support** Senate Bill 154.

Senate Bill 154 requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop and implement a public awareness campaign to encourage the use of mental health advance directives (MHADs) in the State. The Behavioral Health Administration and the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) jointly shall study how first responders and behavioral health crisis providers can access the advanced directives database developed by MHCC, in collaboration with the State-designated health information exchange when responding to a behavioral health crisis.

MHADs are a legal document that give guidelines on a patient's future mental health care. The document can outline preferred facilities, medications, or therapies the patient is willing to undergo, designate a representative who is entrusted to make healthcare decisions on their behalf, etc. MHADs support patient-centered care and may help deescalate a crisis faster while not causing further trauma.

MdcSWC is very supportive of the development and implementation of a public awareness campaign around the use of MHADs. Despite the advantages of having this type of document in place prior to a mental health crisis, they are not widely used. Depending on the level of exposure and frequency in which the message is given, a public awareness campaign will likely increase the utilization of MHADs. Accessibility to a centralized database could help inform all providers involved in caring for a patient in a mental health crisis of the patient's desired care, creating better health outcomes. For these reasons, MdcSWC supports Senate Bill 154.

For more information call:

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