



February 26, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
Health & Government Operations Committee  
House Office Building – Room 241  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – House Bill 784: Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk 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/WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS also support with amendment House Bill 784: Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times (HB 784). The longstanding problem of emergency department (ED) wait times and hospitalizations for individuals experiencing psychiatric crises is complex. The impact of this problem is worse on patients with complex needs and adolescent patients. Addressing these challenges often requires a multifaceted approach involving increased funding for mental health services, improved coordination between emergency departments and psychiatric facilities, enhanced training for ED staff in managing psychiatric emergencies, and efforts to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness. By establishing a task force on the issue, HB 784 attempts to connect all the facets who can then collaborate on solutions.

MPS/WPS would kindly ask, however, that a psychiatrist expressly be added to the task force as we are the clinicians most actively monitoring this issue, conducting studies, and treating patients, who because of mental health and substance use disorders, frequent EDs. MPS/WPS would hope that the psychiatrist chosen would be one who knows about neurodevelopmental beds in pediatrics for that population experiences the longest wait times amongst children. The amendment reads as follows:

On page 2, in line 11, after “physicians” insert “one being a licensed psychiatrist”

For all the reasons above and with the above-referenced amendment, MPS/WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 784. 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