



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**Senate Bill 876-Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Limited Behavioral Health Services**

**Position: *Support***

March 12, 2024

Senate Finance Committee

**MHA Position**

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 62 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 876.

More than 200,000 patients visit Maryland emergency departments (ED) seeking behavioral health services each year. Maryland hospitals care for everyone who comes through their doors, but too often patients in crisis visit hospital EDs due to a lack of behavioral health services in the community.

SB 876 would require the Maryland Medicaid Program to provide coverage for limited behavioral health services to individuals under the age of 18 regardless of whether the individual has had a behavioral health diagnosis. Specifically, this bill would require the Maryland Medicaid program to provide coverage for evaluation and treatment planning, family therapy, group therapy, individual therapy, and services related to prevention, promotion, education, or outreach, or any other services determined necessary by the Maryland Department of Health.

The ongoing behavioral health care crisis in Maryland contributes to ED length of stay and hospital discharge challenges. However, if patients have access to the supportive care services proposed under this bill, they can get the help they need at the onset of behavioral health conditions and stay out of crisis. This bill will improve the availability of behavioral health services and outcomes, keep people out of crisis, and decrease unnecessary ED visits.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report on SB 876.

For more information, please contact:  
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