



HB 772 (SB 765)

Del. Antonio Hayes et al. Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Clinical Services Provided by Certified Peer Recovery Specialists

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=HB0772&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2018RS>

Health & Government Operations Committee

February 27, 2018

Support with Amendment

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine, a professional society of physicians and associated health professionals in the field of addiction medicine; a chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

Our society strongly supports this bill providing coverage for Peer Recovery Specialists.

The only amendment we would have to offer is a minor one, to avoid the word “clinical” services, and instead use “support” services, or similar terminology. The term “clinical” refers to the work of addiction counselors and does not accurately apply to peer recovery specialists.

Peers are critical to helping people with substance use disorder engage with treatment, especially in the area of opioid use disorder, where stigma is a particular barrier.

Stigma is possibly the greatest barrier preventing people from getting the help they need. It is not just the stigma of having a substance use disorder, or having a mental health disorder.

It is really the stigma of treatment itself, especially medication assisted treatment with either buprenorphine, or especially methadone. Both of these medicines are highly effective treatments when used with counseling as part of a comprehensive approach.

Unfortunately, skepticism about treatment is extremely common among affected persons, who tend to mistrust, to some extent, treatment providers. This causes many people to leave treatment prematurely, even when their risk of relapse is near 100%. This is a very common problem.

The large number of people who do not seek treatment also has a significant public health impact.

Peer specialists are indispensable in helping to engage the large segment of the population in need of treatment.
