



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

HB 537 Mental Health Law - Petitions for Emergency Evaluation - Procedures

House Health and Government Operations Committee. February 16, 2021

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine (MDDCSAM) believes that this bill, with amendments, can reduce potentially harmful interactions between law enforcement and persons with mental illness when they are not necessary.

Current mental health law (Health-General §10-622) authorizes specified mental health practitioners to complete a petition for emergency psychiatric evaluation without judicial review. The practitioner then contacts law enforcement to pick up the respondent, serve the petition on the respondent and explain it, and bring the respondent to an emergency evaluation facility.

MDDCSAM believes the bill should be amended to ensure that law enforcement is required to respond to any request from the practitioner to provide security at any point in the emergency evaluation process.

In addition, the practitioner should be shielded from any civil or criminal liability potentially arising from their role in the process.

Finally, nothing in this bill should imply, or directly state, that a qualified practitioner must locate and transport the respondent without the help of law enforcement.
