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TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Katherine Klausmeier

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
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Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 28, 2018

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 703 – *Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program – Establishment*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 703.

Senate Bill 703 establishes a Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program in the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to provide funds to local jurisdictions to establish and expand community behavioral health crisis response systems. The program must award competitive grants to local behavioral health authorities to establish and expand behavioral health crisis response programs and services. It reflects the culmination of more than two years of focused discussion on the critical need for expanded crisis response capability throughout the State and the challenges of achieving that objective given the unique needs of each local jurisdiction.

In 2016, this General Assembly required the Behavioral Health Advisory Council, in consultation with stakeholders, to develop a strategic plan for ensuring that clinical crisis walk-in services and mobile crisis teams are available statewide and operating 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. The council submitted its plan in November 2017. Also in 2017, the HOPE Act was enacted which required MDH to establish crisis treatment centers, with at least one established by June 1, 2018. Senate Bill 703 is consistent with prior legislative action and reflects the next step necessary to reach the State's objectives.

For Maryland to succeed in its effort to develop a crisis response system that effectively addresses the escalating opioid crisis and the growing need for 24/7 access to behavioral health services, it must provide local jurisdictions with the resources necessary to develop programs and systems that address the needs of their residents. Senate Bill 703 advances the State's goal of providing

comprehensive crisis response services statewide in a manner that recognizes the need for flexibility in the type and organizational structure of those services. If enacted, it provides the framework necessary to meet the unique needs of every jurisdiction. Senate Bill 703 has the potential to dramatically improve the State's ability to respond to the escalating opioid crisis and demand for behavioral health services. It is an investment well worth making. A favorable vote is requested.

For more information call:

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