

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0872
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Andrew G. Vetter
Christine K. Krone
410-244-7000

DATE: February 1, 2023

RE: **LETTER OF INFORMATION** – Senate Bill 108 – *Health Insurance – Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Coverage and Reimbursement*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, submits this **letter of information** for Senate Bill 108. Senate Bill 108 requires health insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for an annual “behavioral health wellness visit.” Reimbursement for the visit must be provided on the same basis and at the same rate as an annual wellness visit for somatic health.

MedChi strongly agrees that the State must prioritize the behavioral health needs of its residents. As such, physicians regularly screen patients (both pediatric and adult) to assess mental health needs as well as substance use disorders. It is not the ability to “diagnose” that is the issue but the availability of services to refer patients for further treatment. This is one of the main reasons that patients with behavioral health needs often resort to emergency departments for treatment where they may wait hours, days, and even weeks before an appropriate placement can be made.

As drafted, Senate Bill 108 is unclear on how the annual behavioral health wellness visit will be conducted and by whom and how it complements the current screening requirements. More importantly, MedChi believes that this issue needs to be part of a comprehensive discussion to address access to treatment services. MedChi appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments.