

September 29, 2026

Members of the Senate Institutional Sustainability and Innovation Committee:

On behalf of more than 235 member hospitals and health systems, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) writes in support of Senate Bill 1403, sponsored by Chairman Frank Farry (R-Bucks).

Crisis intervention services provide a critical safety net for individuals experiencing a behavioral health emergency. Access to behavioral health crisis services lessens or eliminates the need to visit an emergency department (ED), leading to a positive reduction in ED overcrowding and boarding, and avoidable inpatient stays. These services improve outcomes by offering the appropriate level of care at the right time and within the community, reducing unnecessary involvement with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Timely intervention is key in helping individuals stabilize, develop coping strategies, and connect with ongoing behavioral health treatment and recovery supports, ultimately saving lives.

Pennsylvania's current EMS regulations present barriers to EMS drop off at behavioral health crisis centers. As a result, individuals experiencing behavioral health crises are often taken to hospital EDs where appropriate evaluation, care, and placement may be delayed.

Behavioral health boarding prolongs distress for patients and strains hospital capacity and staff resources. EDs can be noisy, crowded, and highly stimulating environments that are not designed to provide specialized crisis care. Families may wait for hours or days while hospital staff work to maintain safety and locate an appropriate next step.

SB 1403 would allow EMS personnel to transport patients directly to crisis centers, helping to ensure that individuals receive timely, specialized care in the appropriate setting. By expanding access to crisis centers, the legislation would help patients receive faster, more appropriate treatment, while minimizing avoidable transfers and costs, as well as helping relieve pressure on hospital emergency departments.

HAP urges you to vote yes on SB 1403.

Respectfully submitted,

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