



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

Leading for Better Health

May 22, 2023

The Honorable Michele Brooks
Chair, Human Services Committee
Pennsylvania Senate
Senate Box 203050
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3050

The Honorable Art Haywood
Minority Chair, Human Services Committee
Pennsylvania Senate
Senate Box 203004
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3004

Dear Chairwoman Brooks and Chairman Haywood:

On behalf of approximately 235 member hospitals—including 157 hospital emergency departments and nearly 85 inpatient behavioral health units, institutions for mental disease, and standalone psychiatric hospitals—The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) expresses its support for and urges the Health and Human Services Committee to take action on Senate Bill 445, sponsored by Senator Frank Farry. The bill seeks to integrate mental health services into primary treatment settings to ensure that people can receive the vital care they need when they need it.

Many aspects of our behavioral health system are in crisis. Pennsylvanians are not receiving the right mental health care, at the right time, or in the right setting. The goal of this legislation is to help Pennsylvanians before their mental health needs require emergency care.

SB 445 seeks to better integrate behavioral health treatment across the continuum of health care over the long term. The goal is to support individuals' behavioral health before they reach crisis. Areas of emphasis include the Collaborative Care Model and the Primacy Care Behavioral Health Model, which link mental health clinicians with physical health clinicians in other specialties, like primary care and oncology. With mental health expertise and services integrated into these practices, Pennsylvanians can benefit from well-coordinated, whole-person care. This legislation creates a grant program for small primary care providers to cover start-up activities, prioritizing rural and underserved areas of the commonwealth. Additionally, the bill would establish technical assistance to support promotion and implementation of integrated behavioral health care statewide.



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Hospital emergency departments (ED) are a main point of entry for patients who need critical behavioral health care. While EDs are improving their abilities to effectively assess and triage patients in need of such care, after stabilizing a person's physical health, hospitals often face long delays in being able to move patients to the proper inpatient and outpatient settings to get the treatment they need. Placement delays require patients to wait in EDs for extended periods—a situation that is stressful for the person in crisis, the health care professionals who want to provide the best care, and the hospital staff charged with finding and coordinating clinically appropriate treatment. Hospitals are overwhelmed. The commonwealth should place great priority on keeping Pennsylvanians well, so that there is less need to seek ED care in the first place.

Along with the potential advancement offered by SB 445, HAP also continues to urge you and leaders of both chambers to act immediately to authorize the expenditure of last year's one-time, \$100 million appropriation of federal funds to support the recommendations of the Behavioral Health Commission for Adult Mental Health.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and prioritization of legislative measures that aim to address Pennsylvania's mental health crisis. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at HTyler@HAPonline.org or (717) 433-1997. We stand ready to assist in this vital work that will benefit all Pennsylvanians.

Sincerely,

Heather Tyler
Vice President, State Legislative Advocacy

c: The Honorable Frank Farry
Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee