



The Hospital + Healthsystem  
Association of Pennsylvania

*Leading for Better Health*

May 22, 2023

The Honorable Chris Dush  
Chair, State Government Committee  
Pennsylvania Senate  
Senate Box 203025  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3025

The Honorable Amanda Cappelletti  
Minority Chair, State Government Committee  
Pennsylvania Senate  
Senate Box 203017  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3017

Dear Chairman Dush and Chairwoman Cappelletti:

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 State Government Committee to take action on Senate Bill 606, sponsored by Senator Frank Farry, which offers a common-sense intervention to address the commonwealth’s behavioral health crisis.

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. We believe that this bill represents an important step forward for the commonwealth’s behavioral health care delivery system. As you may know, this measure overwhelmingly passed House last year. We believe that it represents a well-vetted, bipartisan, and well-positioned policy measure.

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.



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SB 606 offers much-needed assistance to help hospitals timely transition patients to the care settings that are more appropriate to their needs. While this bill does not create new behavioral health treatment capacity, as proposed it would generate and gather data about the transition bottleneck—permitting the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, for the first time, to systematically track and measure the scope of this problem and, in turn, craft targeted, effective solutions to this issue. Also, the bill enhances accountability for stakeholders who are key to ensuring that patients can access appropriate and timely care.

There is no “silver bullet” that can solve Pennsylvania’s behavioral health care crisis. Shoring up the commonwealth’s mental health delivery system in order to meet the needs of all Pennsylvanians will take sustained effort and a multidimensional approach. Along with the potential advancement offered by SB 606, HAP also continues to urge you and leaders of both chambers to immediately 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](mailto: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

cc: The Honorable Frank Farry  
Members of the Senate State Government Committee