



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

Leading for Better Health

January 19, 2022

TO: Madam Chair Brooks, Chairman Haywood, and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Heather Tyler, Vice President, State Legislative Advocacy

SUBJECT: House Bills 1561 and 1563, Modernizing State Laws on Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders

On behalf of more than 240 members statewide, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) expresses its support of House Bills 1561 and 1563, sponsored by Representatives Frank Farry (R-Bucks) and Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster). The bills passed the House unanimously and referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Similarly, Senator Devlin Robinson (R-Allegheny) has introduced companion legislation, Senate Bills 901 and 902, which have also been referred to the committee.

House Bills 1561 and 1563 allow for sharing of certain patient information between a patient's team of health care providers to plan for better care that treats the whole person. Aligning health care policy that recognizes the connection between physical health and behavioral health is imperative to the health of all Pennsylvanians. The bills simply modernize Pennsylvania state laws on behavioral health and substance use disorders to align them with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and federal substance use disorder regulatory standards.

As it stands, Pennsylvania's laws do not align with federal requirements. Confidentiality restrictions of Pennsylvania's Mental Health Procedures Act (MHPA) and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Control Act (DAACA) do not allow collaborative data sharing among health care providers for patients receiving treatment for behavioral health and substance use disorder (SUD).

By being more informed of the patient's whole plan of care, providers and patients can work together to make fully informed care decisions and in so doing improve the safety and quality of care.

On behalf of Pennsylvania hospitals, we respectfully ask for your support of these bills and that the committee considers House Bills 1561 and 1563 in the near future.