



Senate Bill 703

Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Establishment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health & Government Operations and
Appropriations Committees

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From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 703 as it represents a new state commitment to support counties establishing or expanding behavioral health crisis services.

SB 703 creates the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant program to be administered by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). Local behavioral health authorities are eligible for competitive grants to establish or expand crisis response programs. Examples of eligible services include but are not limited to mobile crisis teams, on-demand walk-in services, and residential beds. Award priority is to be given to applicants that make use of more than one funding source, demonstrate efficiency in service delivery, and evidence a strong plan for integration into existing systems.

Each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions has a local behavioral health authority that is responsible for planning, managing, and monitoring behavioral health services in their county. These authorities may be county government agencies, quasi-governmental, private or non-profits entities that oversee mental health, substance abuse, or overall behavioral health services locally. SB 703 would significantly support and advance those efforts.

This grant program affords these authorities the opportunity to build upon progress made both at the local and state levels to provide comprehensive behavioral crisis services that can meet their community needs on demand. It is vitally important to connect individuals to services when they reach out for help and not a moment later. The budget appropriations for the program ensure that the authorities can invest in and build long-term programs instead of stop-gap fixes. Additionally, the terms of the grant incentivize local authorities to capitalize on existing resources without fear of the funding supplanting their current sources.

Establishing and expanding behavioral crisis services is important to local governments and critical for the health and welfare of their communities. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 703.