

**Senate Bill 608 Maryland Medical Assistance Plan and Health Insurance -
Pharmacogenomic Testing - Required Coverage**

Finance Committee

March 4, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 608.

SB 608 requires Maryland Medicaid and commercial health insurers to provide coverage for pharmacogenomic testing when ordered for treatment of depression or anxiety.

Pharmacogenomic testing holds enormous promise for improving the treatment of mental health disorders. These tests, which only need to be administered once in a patient's lifetime, evaluate genetic variants that affect how a drug is metabolized and acts on a patient's body. The results can help clinicians determine which medications may require dose adjustments, may be less likely to work, or may have an increased risk of side effects.

Medications are often a primary course of care for depression or anxiety, but few patients achieve remission with their first prescription. This results in an inefficient, frustrating trial-and-error process that delays treatment and could lead to worsening of symptoms, preventable emergency department usage and psychiatric hospitalization.

This process also contributes to higher overall health care costs. According to a [2020 analysis](#) of claims data for 21 million commercially insured individuals, patients with behavioral health conditions in addition to physical health conditions drive high total health care costs, yet among these patients, spending for behavioral health treatment is just a small portion of total health care spending, while the vast majority of spending is for physical treatment.¹ The report demonstrates clearly that early identification and effective treatment of mental illness provides both human *and* financial benefits.

Pharmacogenomic testing informs prescribing, improves patient outcomes, and reduces overall health care costs. For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 608 and urges a favorable report.

¹ Davenport, S., Gray, T.J., Melek, S. "How do individuals with behavioral health conditions contribute to physical and total healthcare spending?" *Milliman*. August 13, 2020.

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