



## MASSACHUSETTS PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY

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Good afternoon, Chairpersons Edwards and Day, and members of the committee. My name is Adeliza Olivero. I am a public sector forensic psychiatrist, and I also practice in the psychiatric emergency department at Boston Medical Center. I am testifying today on behalf of the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society to express strong support for Senate Bill 1176 and House Bill 1749, *An Act Relative to a Humane Response to a Mental Health Crisis*.

Massachusetts is known for excellent psychiatric care, yet our mental health laws remain outdated and often impede evidence-based treatment. I routinely see how untreated psychiatric illness leads to prolonged emergency department stays, criminal charges, incarceration, and family crises—preventable outcomes by modernized statutes.

Chapter 123, Sections 12(e) and 35 are of particular concern. They effectively criminalize mental illness by requiring law enforcement to act as first responders for individuals already deemed at risk by a judge. Patients in crisis are handcuffed, transported in police cruisers, placed in holding cells with criminal defendants, and left without treatment for hours while awaiting legal processing. Only after these delays are they taken to an emergency department—the same place they could have gone immediately under a standard Section 12(a) for timely evaluation and stabilization.

Holding a person in psychiatric crisis in a courthouse cell is clinically inappropriate, inhumane, and deeply distressing for families seeking help. It also wastes significant public resources by involving police, court staff, and redundant transportation in what should be a purely clinical matter. For these reasons, I urge the committee to support S.1176 and H.1749 to ensure a humane, effective, and rights-respecting response to mental health crises in the Commonwealth.