

**Senate Bill 693 State Personnel – Maryland Department of Health –
Pay Rates and Staffing Requirements
Finance Committee
March 6, 2020
Position: SUPPORT**

The Mental Health Association of Maryland 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, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 693.

SB 693 increases pay rates for staff at state psychiatric facilities.

State psychiatric facilities treat individuals with serious mental illnesses who require an intensive array of specialized treatment services. Individuals receiving treatment at these facilities are primarily court-ordered (i.e. 'forensic') patients with unique needs. These are challenging work environments that require a particular set of skills and qualifications, and staff pay rates should reflect that reality.

The workload at state psychiatric facilities is daunting, and it is not uncommon for frontline staff to experience burnout and low morale. High demands and low wages force many qualified and dedicated employees to seek employment elsewhere. Staff turnover can disrupt treatment plans, compromise staff and patient safety, and hinder patient recovery and discharge.

This bill would help to recruit and retain qualified personnel and reduce staffing shortages in state psychiatric facilities. For this reason, **MHAMD supports Senate Bill 693 and urges a favorable report.**