

**SB 918 Human Services – Trauma-Informed Care – Commission and Training**  
**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**  
Senate Finance Committee, March 6, 2020

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a voluntary, non-profit citizens' organization concerned with all aspects of behavioral health. MHAMD's Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (the Coalition) is comprised of representatives from aging, mental health, consumer, family and professional associations and government agencies working together to improve the quality and accessibility of behavioral health assessment, treatment, recovery and illness prevention services for older Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for SB 918 with amendments.

There is a growing body of research substantiating the relationship between traumatic experiences and behavioral health disorders. Likewise, there is evidence that service programs in areas of health, criminal justice, human services, rehabilitation services, etc. might be structured and delivered in ways that are re-traumatizing and therefore ineffective, or worse, damaging to the people they serve. SB 918 is a promising step towards bringing Maryland's public services into alignment with trauma-informed standards for program policies and procedures, workforce training and systems development that will benefit rather than harm individuals who have experienced, and need to heal, from trauma.

Unfortunately, as written, SB 918 targets children, youth and families and leaves out the fastest growing demographic in Maryland, adults over the age of 65, a group which currently outnumbers children in Maryland schools. It is common for older adults to have endured traumatic events at some time in their lives. In later life, it is common for people to experience traumatic physical, emotional, mental, environmental and social changes that are threatening, unwanted and uncontrollable. When trauma survivors are again exposed to (or "triggered" by) circumstances that are threatening, unwanted and uncontrollable, they are at a much higher risk for adverse consequences such as somatic and behavioral health disorders.

To ensure that older adults are not left behind by this important legislation that creates a Commission on Trauma-Informed Care to develop statewide trauma-responsive strategies and systems of care, we respectfully ask that the following amendments be made to SB 918:

**AMENDMENTS:**

- Include the Maryland Department of Aging among other State agencies that are involved in the tasks of the commission and which will benefit from trauma-informed training.
- Define and add "older adults" to places in the bill that specifies target populations.
- Add to the commission one licensed geriatric mental health clinician with expertise in trauma.

Maryland residents need public services that are impactful, effective and respectful of the individuals who are served despite the age of that individual. For this reason, we encourage the Committee's favorable report on SB 918 with amendments.