



**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee

**Bill Number:** House Bill 1515

**Title:** Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Establishment

**Hearing Date:** March 11, 2020

**Position:** Support

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The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) strongly supports *House Bill 1515 – Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans - Establishment*. This bill establishes a grant program within the Maryland Department of Health to expand community behavioral services to veterans and their families.

If passed, this grant program would establish a mechanism for licensed clinical professional counselors (LCPCs) to provide mental health services to active duty military personnel, veterans, and their dependents. Currently, federal rules for the Department of Veterans Affairs and TRICARE do not permit the independent practice of LCPCs when providing mental health services. These outdated rules are in contradiction to the majority of states, including Maryland, which permit LCPCs to practice independently.

Unfortunately, these federal restrictions have prohibited access for active duty military and veterans seeking mental health treatment even as suicide rates among veterans remains high and provider capacity is limited.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Rachael faulkner at [rfaulkner@policypartners.net](mailto:rfaulkner@policypartners.net) or 410-693-4000.