

2/17/2022

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

SB523 - Occupations and Professions - Licenses, Certificates, and Registration – Immigrants

My name is Ann Mazur, and I am the Chief Executive Officer for EveryMind, a mental health nonprofit based in Rockville, Maryland. EveryMind has positively impacted the mental health and wellness of children, youth, adults, veterans, and families in Maryland for 65 years. As the largest provider of school-based mental health services in Montgomery County, a core center for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and one of seventeen centers across the nation for the Institute of Veteran and Military Families' AmericaServes, EveryMind has been committed to recruiting the best talent, serving as a training opportunity for Master of Social Work students, and offering multilingual mental health and human services to the residents of Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, EveryMind saw a shortage of licensed mental health clinicians, case workers, and hotline specialists in the region, recruiting therapists from as far away as Florida. During the pandemic, the availability of talented, licensed professionals in the mental health and human services sector has shrunk. Competition is even fiercer for the limited pool of bi- and multilingual therapists.

Amidst this shortage, EveryMind invested heavily, doubling our HR department, bringing in HR interns, and increasing licensed staff salaries to keep up with competition and the steep rise in the market. This year alone, EveryMind increased spending by \$200,000 to bolster recruiting and increase therapist salaries by 15% to match the current nonprofit market rate. Therapist salaries across the region have risen due to the shortage of these professionals and the increase in demand. Nonprofit community mental health organizations like EveryMind simply cannot keep up with the salaries offered in the private sector and government sectors. As we work with our fellow nonprofits to address the urgent mental health needs of our community, it has become clear that the pipeline of students studying social work and mental health in the school system is not adequate to meet our State's needs for many years to come.

EveryMind is pleased to support SB523—Occupations and Professions – License, Certificate, and Registration – Immigrants. Maryland has a long history of being a national leader in suicide prevention, homeless outreach, and education, meeting the needs of a racially and ethnically diverse constituency. It is critical that the number of bi- and multi-lingual mental health clinicians

and case workers in our state grows to accommodate the demand. We can only do that if we look outside of our state, region, and country to recruit this vital talent workforce.

EveryMind urges the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to pass SB523 to prohibit occupational or professional licensing board or other government agency in the State from denying an occupational or professional license, certification, or registration to an immigrant if the individual meets certain require