

2/7/2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

SB187 - 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 MidAtlantic. As the mental health crisis worsens, EveryMind saw a shortage of licensed mental health clinicians, case workers, and hotline specialists in the region. The availability of talented, licensed professionals in the mental health and human services sector continues to contract as the demand for their services grows. Competition is even fiercer for the limited pool of bi- and multilingual, culturally competent therapists.

Amidst this shortage, EveryMind invested heavily in growing our HR department and contracting additional recruiters. To increase retention efforts, we increased licensed staff salaries to keep up with competition for mental health professionals and expanded our search and incentives to attract talent from other states. Last year, EveryMind increased spending by \$200,000 to bolster recruiting and increase therapist salaries by 15% to match the current nonprofit market rate. Nonprofit community mental health organizations like EveryMind cannot keep up with the salaries offered in the private sector and government sectors for this scarce and skilled labor force. As we work to address the urgent mental health crisis in our schools and community, the pipeline of social work and mental health professionals is too small to meet our State's and nation's needs for services.

EveryMind is pleased to support SB187—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 SB187 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 requirements.