



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

February 21, 2023

House Bill 418: Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established

Written Only Testimony

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 418. HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state.

House Bill 418 establishes the Behavioral Health Workforce Investment Fund to provide reimbursement for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals.

Healthcare today faces the greatest shortage and the most tremendous opportunity in workforce development in a generation. To meet this opportunity and succeed, we must deploy new tools and create innovative programs to shore up the healthcare workforce.

Behavioral and mental health is a critical component of overall health and wellbeing at every stage of life, yet it is among the most challenging areas of healthcare to tackle. Across healthcare settings, we are facing a shortage of workers to provide vital behavioral health services to Marylanders in need.

While workforce recruitment and retention challenges have long existed in healthcare, these challenges have only grown worse over the last several years and they will remain as we navigate a post-pandemic world. This legislation is important to combating staffing challenges and removing barriers to entry, which will help ensure that Marylanders have access to behavioral healthcare resources and professionals.

As we plan our long-term “new normal” in healthcare, we are placing considerable attention on how on-the-job training, education programs, certification, and recruitment can be overlapped to produce more professionals across the care continuum – especially in the field of behavioral health.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 418.

Submitted by:

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