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**Written Testimony**  
**House Bill 418 - Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established**  
**Health and Government Operations Committee – February 21, 2023**  
**Support**

**Background: House Bill 418** will establish 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.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. This includes Jewish Community Services (JCS), which offers programs and services for people of all ages and backgrounds, helping them achieve their goals, enhance their wellbeing, and maximize their independence. JCS' experienced licensed clinical social workers, counselors, psychologists, and psychiatric providers currently provide therapy and medication management to a large population of clients with behavioral and mental health needs.

There are many positive proposed solutions for growing the behavioral health workforce – stipends and scholarships, enhanced training programs, loan repayment, paid internships, etc. The question, however, is how much funding do we put into these different initiatives and how do we target efforts to ensure we are properly resourcing all behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals? HB 418 is the answer.

The bill establishes a Behavioral Health Workforce Investment Fund to reimburse for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals. Funding is left discretionary initially to allow for a required workforce needs assessment that will (1) determine the immediate, intermediate, and long-term unmet need and capacity of Maryland's behavioral health workforce; (2) calculate the total number of behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals needed over the next 5 years, 10 years, and 20 years; and (3) make very specific findings and recommendations regarding the types of workforce assistance programs and funding necessary to meet the need across all sectors of the behavioral health workforce.

**For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB418.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*