



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 21, 2023

HB 418

**Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established**

**House Health & Government Operations Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 418 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.

Maryland is in the midst of a behavioral health workforce crisis. Federal data<sup>1</sup> released just this month found that Maryland has **63 federally designated mental health professional shortage areas** (HPSAs)<sup>2</sup>, including 11 entire counties. These shortage areas, in which less than 20% of residents are getting their mental health needs met, impact over 1.7 million Marylanders. Another indicator found that **17 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions come in below the national average** (350:1) in terms of population to mental health providers, with a number that are considerably lower.<sup>3</sup> This is unsustainable. There are simply not enough behavioral health professionals to meet the mental health and substance use needs of all Marylanders.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/Default/GenerateHPSAQuarterlyReport>

<sup>2</sup> A HPSA is a geographic area, population group, or health care facility that has been designated by the US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as having a shortage of health professionals in one of three categories – primary care, dental health, and mental health

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/maryland?year=2022&measure=Mental+Health+Providers&tab=1>

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for House Bill 418.