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**February 21, 2023**

**Testimony on House Bill 418**  
**Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established**  
**House Health and Government Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1500 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We strongly urge you to support House Bill 418 to support the behavioral health community’s workforce recruitment and retention efforts in what is frankly a time of crisis.

Federal data released just this month found that Maryland has **63 federally designated mental health professional shortage areas**, 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** in terms of population to mental health providers, with a number that are considerably lower.

This situation is unsustainable. There are simply not enough behavioral health professionals to meet the mental health and substance use needs of all Marylanders.

There are many positive ideas and strategies for growing the behavioral health workforce – stipends and scholarships, enhanced training programs, loan repayment, paid internships, etc. House Bill 418 is an effort to determine how best to prioritize and support these alternatives.

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.

This bill will expand and stabilize Maryland’s behavioral health workforce. For these reasons, we urge you to support House Bill 418 and give it a **favorable report**.

