



HB 418
Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established
House Health & Government Operations Committee
February 21, 2023
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 418 which would establish a workforce investment fund to reimburse for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors. We recognize that in order to provide the quality services that Marylanders deserve, we need to expand our mental health workforce.

Catholic Charities operates 8 outpatient mental health clinics, a diagnostic unit for children, a residential treatment center, and a special needs placement school. Across the board, we are having difficulties hiring and retaining behavioral health professionals. There simply are more positions than trained individuals seeking work. As we work to expand school based mental health services, reduce the hospital overstay issue and stabilize our public behavioral health system, it is imperative that there be a sufficient behavioral health workforce.

HB 418 offers a framework to rebuild our behavioral health workforce. The bill requires a workforce assessment to (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 assessment will be used to guide the use of the Fund.

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 418.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy

