



Maryland State Council
Safe Practice, Safe Care.

To: Maryland Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

From: Maryland State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association

Date: February 21, 2023

Re: HB 418 Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established

Good day Chairman Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, bill sponsor, Delegate Bagnall, and Committee members,

The Maryland Emergency Nurses Association urges a favorable vote on HB 418, which will establish a special non-lapsing Behavioral Health Workforce Investment Fund and require the MHCC (Maryland Health Care Commission) to conduct a comprehensive behavioral health workforce needs assessment.

Emergency nurses work with behavioral health patients every shift, every day, with many boarding in our ERs for days, weeks and sometimes months. We have great compassion and empathy for these patients because it is often very difficult for them to receive appropriate and timely care by behavioral health specialists. This is especially true for certain sub-sets of behavioral health patients, such as geriatric patients with dual medical and psychiatric diagnoses, pediatric psychiatric patients, and neuro-psychiatric pediatric patients. The State of Maryland does not have enough inpatient behavioral health beds or specialized professionals to care for all the patients who are brought to Maryland emergency rooms in need of acute psychiatric treatment.

This fund will help define the behavioral health workforce needs, as well as provide reimbursement for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining these very important clinicians. More

psychiatrists, licensed psychologists, licensed psychiatric social workers, licensed psychiatric nurse practitioners, licensed psychiatric nurses, substance abuse counselors, and other behavioral health paraprofessionals are needed to care for the ever-growing number of patients who need inpatient and outpatient mental health treatment and support. This fund will help quantify this need.

We thank you in advance for a favorable review of HB 418.

Sincerely,

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Resources:

Maryland Hospital Association. 2019. Executive Summary: Behavioral Health Discharge Delays in Maryland Hospitals. <https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/resources/mha-report-jan-2019.pdf>