

HEATHER BAGNALL
Legislative District 33C
Anne Arundel County



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 160
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3406 · 301-858-3406
800-492-7122 Ext. 3406
Heather.Bagnall@house.state.md.us

Health and Government Operations
Committee
Subcommittees

Health Occupations and Long-Term Care

Public Health and
Minority Health Disparities

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 21, 2023

HB418 Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established

Madame Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 418.

Maryland is facing a behavioral health crisis. One of the central components of this crisis is a shortage in mental health professionals. Per the federal Health Resources and Services Committee, all but six of Maryland's 24 counties are experiencing a significant shortage of these professionals, and all but one are experiencing a partial shortage¹. Because of the behavioral health workforce shortage, Marylanders are too often unable to access the care that they need. As such, addressing the shortage is an important step in ensuring that all Marylanders have access to critical behavioral health services. House Bill 418 proposes a remedy for the shortage.

House Bill 418 requires the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) to produce a report on the state of the behavioral health workforce shortage, including where personnel are most immediately needed. The Commission would also report to the Health and Government Operations Committee its findings on how to recruit, train, and retain these employees. This requirement is modeled after the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland, which was established in 2022 for the purpose of studying the health care sector's workforce shortage more broadly. Additionally, House Bill 418 will establish the permanent Behavioral Workforce Investment Fund. The fund will allocate much-needed revenue for the reimbursement of expenses to recruit, train, and retain behavioral health professionals. MHCC would be required to produce a report on the funds used each fiscal year and provide it to this Committee.

It is important that action is taken now to address the shortage of mental health workers so that all Marylanders have access to the care they need. House Bill 418 provides a robust approach to assist with behavioral health workforce development and retention. I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 418.

¹ <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/charts/?state=MD>