



OUTPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS
RESIDENTIAL CARE AND PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION

House Bill 418 Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 21, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Key Point Health Services provides mental health care to the most traumatized, chronically ill, and lowest income patients. Our comprehensive services are provided by psychiatrists, licensed counselors, and licensed social workers in Cecil, Harford, Baltimore, Anne Arundel counties and Baltimore City.

Maryland is in the midst of a behavioral health workforce crisis. Federal data¹ released just this month found that Maryland has **63 federally designated mental health professional shortage areas** (HPSAs)², 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.³ Harford and Cecil county qualify for mental health professional shortage areas.

This 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. The question, however, is how much funding do we put into these different initiatives and how do we target efforts to ensure we are properly resourcing **all** behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals? **HB 418 is the answer.**

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

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

² 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

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

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program

135 N. Parke St · ABERDEEN, MARYLAND 21001

Phone 443-625-1600 · Fax 443-625-1540

www.keypoint.org



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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 is important to Key Point Health Services because due to the rural locations we operate are difficult to attracting and retaining qualified individuals. But our services demand has increased in all areas we operate.

This bill will expand and stabilize Maryland's behavioral health workforce. **For these reasons, Key Point Health Services Inc. urges this committee to pass HB 418.**

Very Respectfully.

*Russell Weber
Chief Executive Officer
Key Point Health Services Inc.
WWW.KeyPoint.ORG*