



Committee: Senate Budget and Tax Committee

Bill: Senate Bill 362 – Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act

Hearing Date: February 29, 2024

Position: Support with Amendment

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports Senate *Bill 352 – Budget Reconciliation Act* with an amendment. We urge the Committee to remove the language that transfers \$1.6 million from the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists to the general fund to support the Behavioral Health Administration.

On page 35, strike lines 24 and 25:

~~(1) \$1,648,669 of the funds in the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists Fund established under § 17-206 of the Health Occupations Article~~

LCPCM appreciates that Maryland is facing a budget shortfall, but we are deeply concerned about the proposed fund transfer. The Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists is entirely funded from licensure fees from licensed clinical professional counselors, alcohol and drug counselors, marriage and family therapists, and behavior analysts.

Licensed clinical professional counselors, along with our other behavioral health colleagues, are shouldering the immense increase in the need for behavioral health services in Maryland. As a profession, we are already stretched to the limit in our professional responsibilities. We should not shoulder the additional burden of paying for the very services that we provide under the Behavioral Health Administration. The proposed fund transfer is counterintuitive. We want to ensure that the Behavioral Health Administration is appropriated funded, but the funding should come from the State's general resources as shared priority for everyone in the State.

Please eliminate the proposed fund balance transfer from the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists. If you need any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.