

MARYLAND RETAILERS ALLIANCE

The Voice of Retailing in Maryland



**HB829 Public Health - Service Sector Employees - Mental Health Awareness and Skills Building Training
Finance Committee
March 21st, 2024**

Position: Informational

Background: HB829 would require the State to develop a mental health awareness training program for the service industry sector in Maryland.

Comments: The Maryland Retailers Alliance (MRA) applauds the goal of increasing mental health awareness in Maryland. HB829 would require the Departments of Health and Labor to develop and publicize a mental health training program for employees of the service industry sector in the state. We agree that access to such a resource could make employees more comfortable when responding to patrons and customers who may be in crisis.

When HB829 first came to MRA's attention, we were under the impression that training participation would be mandatory for all service sector employees. We reached out to the sponsor and were assured that she had no intentions of imposing training mandates on businesses. We appreciate her attention to the business community's concerns and would not oppose the development of a **voluntary** training resource. Some large businesses already have similar resources available for employees and there are currently many public campaigns and organizations working to decrease the stigma surrounding mental health struggles and illnesses. A voluntary training program from the State would be a positive addition to these resources, and MRA will remain neutral on the proposal unless participation were to become mandatory.

Thank you for your consideration.