

**Senate Finance Committee**

**March 26, 2025**

**HB 1351 - Health Insurance - Provider Panels - Credentialing for  
Behavioral Health Care Professionals**

**\*\*\* Favorable with Amendments \*\*\***

The National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) strongly supports HB 1351, which aims to enhance the credentialing process for behavioral health care professionals by requiring health insurance carriers to respond to providers seeking participation in their networks within 60 days. This bill addresses an urgent need to streamline the credentialing process, which is vital for ensuring that Marylanders have access to timely and quality behavioral health care.

Currently, the prolonged delays in the credentialing process create significant barriers for social workers and other mental health professionals. In particular, social workers, who play a crucial role in the delivery of behavioral health services, are often not referred to appropriately by health insurance carriers. The lack of responsiveness and the slow pace of credentialing exacerbate the already critical workforce shortage in behavioral health care.

NASW-MD believes that this bill's provision to require carriers to accept or reject applications within 60 days will help address these workforce challenges by facilitating quicker access for social workers to join insurance networks. It will also reduce the gaps in care that many Marylanders face when seeking mental health services. Faster credentialing ensures that individuals in need of care are not left waiting and that providers can begin delivering essential services without unnecessary delays.

**We request one technical amendment. On page 2, in line 10, strike “a licensed graduate social worker or” as that level of social worker no longer exists in Health Occupations §19-101.**

House Bill 1351 is a step in the right direction toward addressing Maryland's workforce shortages in behavioral health care and improving access to services. We request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW (she/her)  
Executive Director - Maryland