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Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

—
Chair

Health and Government
Operations Committee

—

Rules and Executive
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HB 783 - Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training

SPONSOR TESTIMONY: Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk (Favorable with Amendments)

Madam Vice Chair and members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

I am pleased to present House Bill 783: Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training. In 2021, we passed HB 28, requiring healthcare providers to complete cultural and linguistic competency training as part of their license renewal. HB 783 builds on this foundation by addressing the broader issue of structural racism, which continues to drive disparities in healthcare access, treatment, and outcomes—particularly for Black, Hispanic, and other marginalized communities. These inequities lead to higher rates of chronic disease, lower life expectancy, and poorer overall health outcomes.

Structural racism in healthcare is not just about individual bias; it is embedded in policies, institutional practices, and systemic barriers that limit opportunities for historically underserved communities. Research consistently shows that implicit bias among healthcare providers contributes to disparities in diagnosis, treatment options, pain management, and overall quality of care. However, implicit bias training alone is not enough—we must also confront the structural barriers that shape these disparities.

This bill requires applicants renewing certain health occupation licenses and certifications to attest to completing an approved training program on both implicit bias and structural racism. The Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program will oversee and approve these trainings, ensuring they are evidence-based and effective. By incorporating structural racism training, we equip healthcare professionals with the knowledge to identify and address systemic inequities in care.

I have accepted amendments from the Department of Health, the Maryland Pharmacists Association, and the Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland. These amendments align the definition of structural racism with widely recognized frameworks, expand the list of approved training accreditors to include the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, and authorize health occupation boards to adopt regulations providing continuing education credit for completing this training.

This is a critical next step in strengthening Maryland's healthcare system. While implicit bias training improves provider awareness, addressing structural racism ensures we tackle the root causes of inequity. Health disparities will not disappear on their own—they demand deliberate, sustained action. HB 783 is an essential measure to advance health equity in Maryland.

Just as we passed HB 28 in 2021, I urge this committee to support HB 783 to ensure Maryland's healthcare workforce is prepared to provide equitable, culturally competent care for all Marylanders.

Thank you.