

HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 1040
State Board of Physicians-Genetic Counselors-Licensing
March 6, 2020
Favorable
Shannan Dixon, MS, CGC

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 1040.

I am Shannan Dixon and I am here representing the University of Maryland School of Medicine Master's in Genetic Counseling Training Program as well as all my genetic counseling colleagues in Maryland.

In Maryland, genetic counselors can now practice in limited circumstances, but the field of medical genetics is expanding very rapidly, and more genetic counselors are needed in clinical situations beyond tertiary care centers.

The majority of individuals seeking genetic counseling travel to major medical centers to receive services which limits ease of access to those citizens residing in Western Maryland and on the Eastern Shore.

Licensing of genetic counselors will allow for telemedicine in Maryland, thereby increasing access to all citizens.

Maryland is the home to two nationally recognized genetic counseling graduate programs of excellence. This bill will help to retain and recruit highly qualified genetic counselors at a time when there is a nationwide shortage.

In addition to establishing minimum education requirements, this bill creates an investigative process for complaints and disciplinary action as appropriate.

It is past time that Maryland, home of some of the greatest genetics research and clinical care in the world has statutes in place to permit highly educated, licensed and Board-certified genetic counselors to provide services to the thousands of patients that need them.

This is a priority to the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and we have submitted written testimony.

We urge a favorable report on HB 1040.

