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Testimony

HB 1461 – Oppose

John F. Plaskon, Executive Director, Corsica River Mental Health Services, Inc. (CRMHS)

CRMHS has been in existence for 10 years providing outpatient mental health and substance use treatment for approximately 800 individuals annually in 4 locations on the Eastern Shore (Centreville, Cambridge, St. Michaels, Federalsburg).

Three years ago our Medical Director left the agency. An 18 month search for a Psychiatrist using 8 recruitment agencies plus our own advertising, produced only 2 referrals. We hired one of those referrals, a Psychiatrist, who worked on site at least 20 hours per week as required by the regulations in effect at that time. That placement cost \$40,000. It only lasted 2 months.

Fortunately, our placement agency had a guarantee that supported another search. This time, with the passage of HB 1122, we focused on a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP). That one placement agency referred 8 PNP's in only 2 months. The PNP hired did not become our Medical Director, rather, we selected another PNP who had already been on board for 2 years.

The Maryland Psychiatric Society has proposed that HB 1461 does not rescind HB1122, but rather, it clarifies the roles of a Psychiatrist and a PNP. In doing so, it proposes Medical Director and Clinical Director job descriptions to be filled by a Psychiatrist and a PNP, respectively. In my opinion, this is a distinction without a difference.

Everything in the Medical Director job description is within the scope of a PNP. The tasks ascribed to the Clinical Director in HB 1461 do not reflect roles that an advanced clinician – such as a PNP – would perform. Our agency would not survive if we hired PNPs to perform roles that don't even require licensure. It would be completely inefficient and ineffective use of their skills.

HB 1461 repeals HB 1122. The decision made last session by the General Assembly to more effectively meet the clinical needs of individuals with behavioral health disorders would be scrapped. I urge that HB 1461 receive an unfavorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Corsica River is an outpatient Mental Health clinic and Substance Use Disorder provider

***For information about our services and locations call:
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