



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1461

Title: Behavioral Health Programs – Outpatient Mental Health Centers – Medical and Clinical Directors

Hearing Date: March 11, 2020

Position: Oppose

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *Health Bill 1461 – Behavioral Health Programs – Outpatient Mental Health Centers – Medical and Clinical Directors*. This bill establishes delineated definitions for medical and clinical directors within an outpatient mental health center (OMHC).

In 2019, Maryland passed legislation (HB 1122/CH 481) requiring the Maryland Department of Health to adopt regulations that would allow a psychiatric nurse practitioner to serve as the medical director of an OMHC. This legislation stemmed from a long-standing shortage of psychiatrists and the ability of psychiatric nurse practitioners to effectively serve in this capacity within their scope of practice.

If enacted, this bill would erase progress made to date to fill these critical positions by prohibiting the future hiring and retention of psychiatric nurse practitioners as medical directors. In addition, this bill would set a precedent in statute for assigning nonclinical job functions within a behavioral health program to fall within the responsibility of a nurse practitioner or other health care provider who is not a physician.

Considering the nationwide shortage of psychiatrists along with existing law that permits psychiatric nurse practitioners to serve as the medical director of OMHCs, we strongly oppose this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a unfavorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.