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3/1/2021

Members of the House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building Room 121
6 Bladen Street,
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 1215

Stance: Support

Madam Chairman, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of HB1215. The Pro Bono Counseling Project (PBCP) has served as an internship site for students from Maryland colleges and universities for the past 11 years, and I have served as PBCP's primary intern coordinator and supervisor. PBCP's mission is to ensure that Marylanders with limited resources requesting mental health care are provided access to volunteer licensed mental health professionals and other necessary supportive services. We prepare and train the up and coming workforce of mental health professionals. Interns help with case management by managing and updating resources for clients, assisting with interviewing clients in treatment to gather qualitative and quantitative case outcome information, and presenting cases to volunteer therapists.

The PBCP interns help support our organization's mission. They are an integral part of our daily operation. While gathering information about community resources, we have found that many partner organizations have been hit especially hard by COVID-19 and the current economy.

HB1215 can help lift these crucial sectors in our region, while helping students gain access to career-building opportunities. Internships prepare the next generation of providers. Avenues for paid internships increase opportunities for students of color, students from immigrant families, first generation college attendees, and students from lower-income families to participate in pathways to mental health careers.

We have experienced challenges with recruiting interns due to budget constraints. Matching intern funds can make a real impact and a tax credit would also incentivize PBCP to retain our entry level talent.

HB1215 expands access to experiential learning opportunities for students and supports organizations across the state of Maryland. It provides a true pathway to hire and retain the next generation of talent for the state of Maryland. Please support HB1215.

Sincerely,

Sherri Bloom

Sherri Bloom, LCSW-C
Clinical Director
The Pro Bono Counseling Project