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February 2, 2021

Senator Delores Kelley, Chair

Senate Finance Committee

Maryland Senate

11 Bladen Street

Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East

Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: SB 5 - Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

Position: Neutral - Letter of Information

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, would like to applaud the intent of this legislation to address implicit bias in the delivery of health care services. We are enthusiastically in support of efforts to provide health care/mental health care to all residents of Maryland, regardless of their race, gender, sexual preferences, or religion, free from the influences of explicit or implicit bias. We at MPA have been and continue to work hard to be aware of and address issues of bias on a daily basis. In fact, our Board of Examiners already requires that we take course work in issues of cultural diversity for each renewal period.

What we are concerned about is the mechanisms, as we understand it, that are utilized to accomplish the goal of reducing/eliminating bias in the delivery of health/mental health care. Our concerns include:

1. Availability of evidence-based programs that specifically address implicit bias and their impact on the behavior of health care/mental health providers or the patient outcomes.
2. Training programs on their own, without additional supports, may not be enough to effectuate change in health/mental health care providers.
3. Coordination between the Boards and Commission will be essential to ensure the goals of the legislation are met, that each profession is in compliance, and there is no duplication of existing requirements.
4. We are concerned that this bill places the authority to authorize implicit bias training in the hands of a commission outside of the Boards that are responsible for the behavior of health/mental health care providers, potentially creating a complicated system that might not achieve the goals hoped for by the legislation or make it difficult to be sure that each profession is complying with this requirement.

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For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association is providing this letter of information, in conjunction with our strong support for the intent of the SB 5. We are glad to work with the sponsors of the bills to address these concerns.

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at exec@marylandpsychology.org if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Esther Finglass
Esther Finglass, Ph.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.
R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs