

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

"Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination."



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February 25, 2021

House Bill 915 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals POSITION: Support

Dear Chairperson Pendergrass, Vice Chairperson Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health & Government Operations Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

House Bill 915 creates the Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals. The Workgroup must identify and study the shortage of mental health professionals in Maryland who are Black, Latino, or otherwise underrepresented in the mental health profession. They must also assess and make recommendations in their July 1, 2022, report on incentives or other methods to increase the number of:

- Students who are Black, Latino, or otherwise underrepresented in the mental health profession who study at a Maryland higher education institution to become a mental health professional, and
- Mental health professionals who are Black, Latino, or otherwise underrepresented in the mental health profession who provide services in the State, especially in underserved communities.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports HB915 because creating employment opportunities for Black, Latino, and other minority populations to deliver mental health services, especially to underserved communities, benefits both the professionals and the communities they serve. Expanding employment opportunities and increasing health parity will have a directly beneficial impact on promoting and improving the civil rights of all Marylanders, especially by creating access to health services wherever barriers currently exist.

For these reasons and more, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB915. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.