



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL:	House Bill 915 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals
SPONSOR:	Delegate Amprey
HEARING DATE:	February 25, 2021
COMMITTEE:	Health and Government Operations
CONTACT:	Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411
POSITION:	SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 915 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals**, which establishes a Workgroup on Black, Latino, and other underrepresented mental health professionals. Under this Bill, the Workgroup is tasked with making recommendations regarding mental health within these groups to the Governor.

Per a report produced by Mental Health America, between January and September 2020, 19% of adults experienced a mental illness. Additionally, 24% of adults with mental illnesses identified an unmet need for treatment. This same report disclosed that 9.7% of youth in the United States have severe major depression. These statistics only represent 1.5 million Americans who participated in the report, however, severely underrepresents the true scope of the mental health crisis in both the United States and the State of Maryland.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 30% of the State population (61% of the County) identified as African American and 11% of the State population (19.5% of the County) identified as Hispanic. In 2016, 3.41% of the population in Maryland was said to be affected by serious mental illness and 6.71% of the State population was said to be affected by major depressive episodes. Mental health issues in Prince George's County have increased between 2015-2017, and in 2017, 10.9% of the population was said to have frequent mental health distress.

The Prince George's County Human Relations Commission (HRC) is the County's civil and human rights education and enforcement agency. Part of our responsibility

as a human rights agency is to encourage equal opportunity that is diverse and inclusive of the residents in Prince George's County. The proposed Bill requires the Workgroup to identify and study the shortage of minority mental health professionals within the State (especially those who provide services to underserved communities) and to make recommendations to increase the number of Black, Latino, and other minority mental health professionals. It is well known that behavioral health services should be culturally sensitive and culturally responsive in order to provide the best standards of care to minority populations. Anecdotal evidence supports that in many professions, implicit bias and microaggressions based on race and ethnicity can inadvertently cause treatment disparities in mental health issues, thus we support legislation that seeks to expand to a more representative group of mental health professionals to mirror the State's population.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 915** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.