



**Testimony on HB 915 Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**Support**

**February 25, 2021**

Delegate Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) urges you to support HB 915, which establishes the Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals; provides for the composition; requires the Workgroup to study and make recommendations regarding certain mental health professionals and certain students in the State who are Black, Latino, or otherwise underrepresented in the mental health profession; and requires the Workgroup to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

NASW is the largest national organization of social workers representing over 120,000 social workers and over 16,000 of those are licensed here in the state of Maryland. The social work profession provides a large proportion of the mental health services in Maryland and is also one of the most diverse of the provider professions. We are pleased that there are social work programs at each of the HBCUs in Maryland. Nevertheless, we are well aware that much more needs to be done to make sure that underrepresented groups have access to professional education and licensing so that our profession can become even more diverse and the populace which needs our services can find providers who are more attuned to their needs and life experiences. Many clients understandably prefer to receive services from those who look like them.

When delineating the composition of the Workgroup, we note that this bill calls for both three representatives from the mental health profession in the State and three individuals who provide social services in the State. Since social workers make up such a large proportion of the mental health providers and those who provide social services in Maryland, we hope that NASW-MD will be called upon for input in the composition of this workgroup. We stand ready to provide some excellent candidates for the governor's consideration.

**We urge you to vote in favor of HB 915**

Sincerely,

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