



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

February 22, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 899 - Health Occupations Boards - Authority Over Staffing and Infrastructure Operations - Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Pinsky and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for Senate Bill (SB) 899 - Health Occupations Boards - Authority Over Staffing and Infrastructure Operations.

The goal of this legislation is to improve constituent and customer service of the boards and make sure that health occupation licensees are able to apply and renew in a prompt and timely manner. Constituent inquiries are often sent to MDH, however under Health Occupations, § 1-203, MDH lacks the statutory authority or oversight over the Boards to ensure they are handled appropriately. From January 20, 2020 to February 3, 2022 MDH received 3,870 constituent inquiries related to the boards. The top three trending inquiry topics were licensing, complaints against licensees, and the lack of customer service from the boards.

SB 899 establishes that the Secretary of Health has authority over the infrastructure operations of health occupations boards (the boards) and provides the Secretary with the ability to appoint the executive directors of the boards with the advice and consent of each board. Additionally, funding for the support of the infrastructure operations will come from MDH general funds. Please note, SB 899 does **not** provide the Secretary with any authority over the core functions of the boards including licensing, discipline, investigations and scope of practice decisions.

As reported by some of the boards there are challenges keeping up with workloads while also performing necessary administrative functions. For example, the Board of Nursing reported in this year's Joint Chairmen's Report that their fiscal, information technology, and human resource systems are not working.¹ The Board of Professional Counselors reported in their annual report

¹ 2021 Joint Chairmen's Report (p. 93) on nursing workload and staffing.
http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2021/2021_93.pdf

that they still do not have enough staff to handle the backlog of complaints.² This bill will help alleviate those operational and administrative burdens, freeing up current staff to handle complaints and customer inquiries.

Lastly, the Department of Information Technology and MDH are working collaboratively to modernize the board's licensing systems through Maryland OneStop to create a common licensing platform across all boards.³ MDH is eager to provide the OneStop licensing system to all the boards so Marylanders can benefit from this modern and easy-to-use system. MDH has offered to cover the costs of this system to the boards but only one board has signaled their intent to take advantage of this offer.

We support the Sponsor's amendments.

If you have any questions, please contact Heather Shek, Director of Governmental Affairs, at heather.shek@maryland.gov or (443) 695-4218.

Sincerely,



Dennis R. Schrader
Secretary

² 2021 Joint Chairmen's Report (p. 92) on fee structure of Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists. http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2021/2021_92_2021.pdf

³ 2021 Joint Chairmen's Report (p. 92) on Enterprise License Major Information Technology Project for Health Professionals Boards and Commissions. http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2021/2021_92a.pdf