



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 407 – Health Occupations – Health Care Staffing Shortages Emergency –
Declaration and Licensing Practice Requirements (Health Care Heroes Act)

Hearing Date: February 9, 2022

Position: Support with Amendment

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) support with amendments *Senate Bill 407 – Health Occupations – Health Care Staffing Shortages Emergency – Declaration and Licensing Practice Requirements (Health Care Heroes Act)*.

LCPCM appreciates the proactive steps taken by the Lieutenant Governor and the Maryland General Assembly to support licensure compacts. Long-term, we think these compacts offer the best solution to ensure states have the flexibility to meet the health care needs of their residents with appropriately qualified professionals. Maryland was the second state to join the compact for professional counselors; and in the upcoming year, we expect enough states to join so that the compact is activated.

We recognize that the adoption of compacts will take some time, and there may interim solutions to consider when a health care workforce shortage has reached a crises situation. We would request several amendments that would make this bill more oriented to the shortage of behavioral health practitioners. As introduced, the bill is mostly about nursing shortages in hospitals:

- Recognize schools are experiencing significant shortages of behavioral health professionals and school nurses:

On page 2 in line 25 after “PHARMACY”, insert “(14) PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS”

- Require that the Secretary consult with health professional organizations and health occupation boards before declaring an emergency health care workforce shortage:

On page 3 in line 6 after “EMERGENCY”, insert “AFTER CONSULTATION WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, HEALTH OCCUPATION BOARDS, AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS, INCLUDING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS.”

- Delete provision that would grant temporary licenses to people who still need to complete clinical education, experience, or supervision requirements to be licensed, as we think this provision presents a danger to the public.

On page 6, delete lines 7 through 11 in their entirety.

- On page 8, insert a sunset provision that sunsets this bill after 5 years. At that point in time, the Maryland General Assembly should consider whether the adoption of licensure compacts has substantially resolved the issue.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. We look forward to working with the Governor’s office, the Committee, and other stakeholders on this important issue. If we can provide any additional information, please let us know by contacting Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartenrs.net or (443) 926-4443.