



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE ASIAN AMERICAN
AND PACIFIC ISLANDER CAUCUS
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TO: Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
Finance Committee

FROM: Maryland Legislative Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus (AAPI)

DATE: March 23, 2022

RE: HB97 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific
Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health
Professionals

**The AAPI Caucus supports HB97 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian
American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health
Professionals**

The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Legislative Caucus comprises members of the Maryland General Assembly committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders throughout our state. The AAPI Legislative Caucus seeks to engage the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Maryland and ensure that their legislative and policy goals are represented within the General Assembly. The AAPI Legislative Caucus is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the AAPI community and benefits the State of Maryland.

HB97 establishes a workgroup to study the shortage of behavioral health professionals in the State who are Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, or otherwise underrepresented in the behavioral health profession. This workgroup will make recommendations on incentives, systematic changes, and or other methods to increase the number of providers from these groups.

HB97 ensures that our diverse population has access to an equally diverse pool of providers. This bill would help develop the strategies needed to create a mental health workforce that is a reflection of the diversity seen in our own community. This is a critical first step in ensuring that minority groups have access to optimal mental health services for their unique needs. HB97 creates opportunities for underrepresented minority patients to have access to high quality care that truly caters to their needs. Mental health is the cornerstone of our well-being, and we need to use an evidence-based approach with equity at the center of the conversation in order to ensure that our fellow community members feel fully supported.

For these reasons, the AAPI Legislative Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB97. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support.