

House Bill 287 Secretary of Health – Professional Qualification Requirement

Health and Government Operations Committee

February 2, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 287.

HB 287 requires the Secretary of Health to be professionally qualified through experience or education in at least one health-related field, health or law policy, health care facilities administration, health economics or financial management, government operations related to health care, or as a health care provider.

According to the Department of Legislative Services, the Secretary of Health is responsible for managing a budget that will reach nearly \$18 billion next year, the largest percentage of the State budget and nearly one-third of total spending.¹ Agencies under the Secretary's purview include the Public Health Administration, the Behavioral Health Administration, the Developmental Disabilities Administration, and Maryland Medicaid, which currently serves over 1.6 million low-income Marylanders. Among many other critical functions, these agencies oversee all local health departments, the Office of Health Care Quality, and the Maryland Primary Care Program. The Secretary also oversees a variety of essential operational functions, including the state hospital system and the Office of Preparedness and Response.

To best serve the health interests of all Marylanders, it is essential that the Secretary of Health be professionally qualified through experience or education in a health-related field. For this reason, MHAMD supports HB 287 and urges a favorable report.

¹ Department of Legislative Services (January 2022). *Maryland Department of Health Fiscal 2023 Budget Overview*.
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2023fy-budget-docs-operating-M00-MDH-Overview.pdf>