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House Health & Government Operations Committee

March 3, 2022

Support of House Bill 1318

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) urges a favorable opinion on HB 1318 with amendments.

MATOD represents over 65 healthcare organizations across Maryland that provide and promote high-quality, effective medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, psychologists, peer recovery specialists and office personnel who dedicate every day to saving lives. MATOD programs serve over 35,000 Marylanders enrolled in opioid treatment programs (OTPs) receiving methadone and buprenorphine, in conjunction with counseling and other medical services.

There is an overall workforce shortage in the behavioral health field. There is also a great need to increase diversity in order to better meet the needs of our clients. Racial disparities exist in terms of people being able to be properly diagnosed and access treatment. The quality of care can be impacted when someone who is familiar with a client's background, culture or language is not available.

House Bill 1318 proposes a comprehensive approach to the need to diversify the behavioral health workforce. We ask that the bill's purpose be expanded to include training for people entering the field of substance use disorder treatment along with mental health. Many of the therapies clinicians are trained in are used in treatment with people with both diagnoses.

We ask that in each of the instances where mental health appears in the bill, "mental" be replaced with "behavioral" which in Maryland statute is defined to include substance use disorders, mental health disorders, and co-occurring disorders.

We also feel it is appropriate to require training on the topics of cultural competency and humility. We would ask that the 6 hour CEU requirement be lowered to 3, simply because there are so many areas in which trainings are offered and needed.

With these changes, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 1318.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.