



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdCSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Marlon Amprey

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: January 20, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 97 – *Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdCSWC, we **support** House Bill 97.

House Bill 97 establishes a Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and other underrepresented behavioral health professionals. Staffed by the University of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Health, the Workgroup is charged with identifying and studying 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. The Workgroup is to assess and make recommendations on incentives or other methods to increase both the number of students who are Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, or otherwise underrepresented who choose to study to become behavioral health professionals as well as increasing the number who choose to provide behavioral health services in the State, especially in underserved communities. The Workgroup is to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by July 1, 2023.

As the incidences of behavioral health disorders continues to escalate, it is important for the State to evaluate and address not only the need to increase access to necessary services but to also ensure there is adequate provider capacity. The racial and ethnic composition of the behavioral health provider community is a critical component of evaluating the effectiveness of Maryland's behavioral health system of care. The lack of adequate diversity within the provider community will limit the State's ability to appropriately address the behavioral health service needs of underserved communities. An increase in the number of underrepresented behavioral health professionals may also increase the sensitivity of the field to addressing some of the problematic Social Determinants of Health in marginalized communities. Establishment of the proposed Workgroup provides a framework for the State to identify strategies to address the need for greater diversity within the behavioral health provider community. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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