



Maryland
Hospital Association

House Bill 97- Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals

Position: *Support*

January 20, 2022

House Health & Government Operations Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 97.

As part of MHA's [commitment to racial equity](#), Maryland hospitals are evaluating organizational values to ensure they promote equity and inclusion. We are working with members of our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Group and Health Equity Task Force to equip hospital leaders to address race while understanding their own biases. Hospitals are committed to embracing culturally competent care to address disparities in health outcomes and ensure all Marylanders can be as healthy as possible.

HB 97 establishes a task force to study underrepresentation of Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and other minorities as practicing mental health professionals. The task force includes hospitals, community mental health providers, and representation from the state's historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Including Maryland's HBCUs acknowledges the role these institutions play in creating a pipeline of mental health practitioners.

Maryland has a staggering health care workforce crisis. As an example, there are currently 3,900 nursing vacancies in Maryland hospitals, an increase of 50% since August 2021. Long-term solutions will require increasing the pipeline of health care professionals. Breaking down historic barriers for certain populations to enter the profession is needed to meet the care needs of the entire population.

Racism is a public health crisis. Inequities in health care access and quality and outcomes of care harm the health of our whole community. Maryland hospitals have supported legislation to require implicit bias training for health care professionals. Increasing implicit bias training is a good step, but HB 97 would inform the state's efforts to expand opportunities for all Marylanders to join the health care profession and create a workforce that reflects the Maryland population.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report on HB 97.

For more information, please contact:
Brian Sims, Director, Quality & Health Improvement
bsims@mhaonline.org