



**Washington
Psychiatric Society**

January 17, 2022

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
House Health & Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – HB 97: Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS support House Bill 97: Workgroup on Black, Latino, and Other Underrepresented Mental Health Professionals. A 2020 Johns Hopkins Study, *Diversity by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex within the US Psychiatry Physician Workforce*, found that only 10.4% of practicing psychiatrists are Black, Latino, or Native American, compared with 32.6% of the U.S. population. The study also found that 38.5% of practicing psychiatrists are women, even though 50.8% of the U.S. population is female. These statistics are of particular concern given these groups' ever-increasing need for behavioral and mental health services.

HB 97 is a meaningful step at ensuring diversity among mental health professionals, which will, in turn, ensure better delivery of mental health services to all who seek it in our state. Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report of HB 97.

If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee