

Good afternoon Madam chair and Committee members,

I first would like to thank Delegate Smith for sponsoring this bill to address the needs of our profession and communities at large.

I am Robert Marvin "Bobby" Holmes, LMSW, founder of Son of a Dream Services & Multimedia Resources, LLC and a licensed social worker serving children, youth, and families in Maryland. Today, I am expressing my support for Maryland House Bill 1318. I have worked in the mental health profession for a decade now. For myself and so many of my colleagues, cultural competence and humility allows us to strengthen our ability to engage the people we serve and honor who they are in the context of their family and community. This is helpful when establishing a therapeutic relationship that feels inviting, warm, and safe. It also helps cultivate a welcoming space where identity, culture, spirituality, worldviews, and lived experiences are respected.

If we are serious about being more responsive to the mental health needs of Marylanders, I believe it's critical for us to make sure our human service professionals are representative of the people we serve. This makes a huge difference in addressing the stigma around mental health and increasing access to services for those who need it most.

By establishing a Culturally Informed and Culturally Responsive Mental Health Task Force, we are also able to review and adequately address barriers for those seeking to join the profession. I believe it will also help ensure social workers and other licensed professionals are receiving the necessary knowledge and training to be sensitive and responsive to systemic challenges that pose a threat to the safety and well-being of the Black, Brown, Indigenous, People of Color community throughout Maryland.

In closing, the committee's vote for this bill is necessary to provide the support for all Marylanders in need. I thank you all for your time.

-Bobby Marvin Holmes, LMSW
Founder
Son of a Dream Services & Multimedia Resources, LLC

