



**House Health & Government Operations Committee
March 3, 2022**

**House Bill 1318
Health Occupations - Mental Health Services - Cultural Competency and Diversity
Support with Amendments**

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) supports House Bill 1318 in the pursuit of creating a more diverse behavioral health profession. We also would offer a few amendments.

There is no dispute that there are racial disparities in access to both mental health and substance use disorders. Differences in treatment include disparities in access to quality treatment, receiving accurate diagnoses, the length of stay and rates of completion in treatment, and recovery rates. There are various recommendations to address these disparities, including hiring treatment providers of color, implementing effective treatment approaches that incorporate diverse cultural values, and hiring staff who are fluent in multiple languages.

House Bill 1318 proposes a comprehensive approach to the need to diversify the behavioral health workforce. We ask that its reach not just apply to clinicians in the mental health field. There is a high number of people who have co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, and the professions that provide counseling services and therapy are generally trained to work with people with both of these issues. Many of the therapies clinicians are trained in are used in treatment with people with both diagnoses.

We therefore 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.

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

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.