



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

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HB 97

DATE: January 20, 2022

SPONSOR: Delegate Amprey

ASSIGNED TO: Health & Government Operations

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey (leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals

This bill establishes a workgroup to identify and study 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 and to make recommendations methods to increase the number of such health professionals

Montgomery County strongly supports House Bill 97 because of the need to improve access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental and behavioral health providers for residents across the state. There is a shortage of such providers and the County supports House Bill 97 as an essential part of comprehensive action by the legislature to examine how racial and ethnic minority groups would benefit from the study of, and improvement to, behavioral health services across several areas of service delivery.

Montgomery County would eagerly welcome the opportunity to serve on the Workgroup, and in furtherance of this goal, we ask that the Workgroup membership be amended to add a representative of the Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland, a program of Montgomery County government and part of the national "Welcome Back Center Initiative"¹. The Welcome Back Center is uniquely positioned to provide the Workgroup with expertise about the experience of foreign-trained health professionals in attaining educational and licensure credentialing in Maryland and the challenges these professionals face that all too often keep them from practicing in their fields of training.

Montgomery County respectfully urges the committee to adopt the above amendment and issue a favorable report.

¹ The Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland is an innovative model that builds on the personal and professional assets of immigrants living in the United States to: further address health professional shortages; diversify the health workforce; provide economic opportunities to underutilized individuals as they return to work in the health field; and enhance health outcomes of the entire community. In 2006, the Latino Health Initiative (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services) launched The Foreign-Trained Health Professionals Program to facilitate the Maryland health professions licensure process. In 2010, this program became the "Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland," one of several centers comprising the national "Welcome Back Initiative" network. The center provides a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach to effectively address the needs and decrease the challenges and barriers foreign-trained health professionals encounter in Maryland in obtaining their licenses. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Program.aspx?id=OCA/OCAWelcomeB-p482.html>