



Testimony on SB 407
**Health Occupations – Health Care Staffing Shortage Emergency – Declaration
And Licensing and Practice Requirements
(Health Care Heroes Act of 2022)**

Senate Finance Committee
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
February 9, 2022
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) is the leading voice for community-based providers serving the mental health and addiction needs of vulnerable Marylanders. Our 95 members serve the majority of those accessing care through the public behavioral health system. CBH members provide outpatient and residential treatment for mental health and addiction-related disorders, day programs, case management, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), employment supports, and crisis intervention.

Behavioral health providers are facing an unprecedented workforce crisis since the onset of COVID. The licensed positions impacted include those for psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, social workers, and professional counselors, and impacted programs include outpatient clinics, crisis beds, and assertive community treatment. Our members report a 48% increase in the rate of staff turnover and a 42% increase in the rate of staff vacancies since the pandemic began in early 2020. We are also seeing significant increases – 70% - in the amount of time it takes to fill vacancies. As a result, 23% of providers have reduced treatment capacity – and this at a time when suicide attempts and opioid overdoses are spiraling upwards.

SB 407 – which includes behavioral health programs – will provide some needed relief by allowing flexibility in licensure requirements during declared staff shortage emergencies. Providers have been doubly hit by the delays in licensure caused by the hack to the Maryland Department of Health, so expediting temporary licenses for those whose applications are pending would be very helpful.

We thank the Administration for introducing this legislation and ask the Committees to please give it a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.