



March 21, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – House Bill 615: Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals - Extension of Dates

Dear Chair Griffith 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 615: Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals - Extension of Dates (HB 615). A 2020 Johns Hopkins Study, *Diversity by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex within the U.S. 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 female, although 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 615 continues the meaningful discussion around ensuring diversity among mental health professionals, which will, in turn, provide 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 on HB 615. 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