

NCADD-MD - 2023 HB 615 FAV - Workforce Workgroup E

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Senate Finance Committee

March 22, 2023

House Bill 615

**Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other
Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals - Extension of Dates**

Support

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) supports House Bill 615 to extend this workgroup in the pursuit of creating a more diverse behavioral health profession.

There is no dispute that there are racial disparities in rates of addiction, and in its treatment. 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.

There is an overall workforce shortage in the substance use disorder and mental health treatment field. Working with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities to develop strategies to not only increase the diversity of the workforce, but also increase the number of people in the field is one necessary step to better meeting the growing needs of Marylanders.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 615 to give this workgroup time to accomplish its goals.

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.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Acting Secretary

March 22, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

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

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill (HB) 615 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals - Extension of Dates. Chapter 318 of the Acts of 2022 established the Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals (the Workgroup).¹ The Workgroup is tasked to identify and study the shortage of behavioral health professionals in the State who are Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islanders, or otherwise underrepresented in the behavioral health profession. The Workgroup is also tasked to assess and make recommendations on incentives or other methods to increase the number of students and behavioral health professionals who are Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islanders, or otherwise underrepresented in the behavioral health profession who provide behavioral health services in the State, especially in underserved communities. The Workgroup is required to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before July 1, 2023.

MDH supports the extension of timelines for implementation and subsequent final report outlined in HB 615. This extension will allow time to fill all membership seats and provide adequate time to thoroughly study the issues and make recommendations. Workforce problems have an impact on almost every aspect of prevention and treatment across all sectors of the diverse behavioral health field. The issues encompass difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff; the absence of career ladders for employees; marginal wages and benefits; limited access to relevant and effective training; the erosion of supervision; a vacuum with respect to future leaders; and financing systems that place enormous burdens on the workforce to meet high levels of demand with inadequate resources. In addition, the workforce lacks the racial diversity of the populations it serves and is far too often insensitive to the needs of individuals affected by ethnicity, culture, and language.²

¹ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0097/?ys=2022rs>

² An Action Plan on Behavioral Health Workforce Development,
<https://annapoliscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/action-plan-executive-summary.pdf>

The Workgroup can further our efforts in building a more equitable system of care that focuses on improving cultural and linguistic competencies with the expansion of a diverse workforce that has been underrepresented in the behavioral health community.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Secretary

HB 615 - Support - MPS WPS.pdf

Uploaded by: Thomas Tompsett

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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