



February 5, 2024

**Testimony on Senate Bill 459
Grant Applications and Reporting – Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council – Alterations
Senate Budget and Tax Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Mental Health Association of Frederick County (MHA) is an organization providing prevention, intervention and treatment services in Western Maryland including a 24/7 crisis response call center, behavioral health walk-in services and supportive services for families such as home visiting, child care resource and referral and advocacy for children in foster care. We urge you to support Senate Bill 459.

This bill extends the life of the Council until 2028, adds a State Grants Ombudsperson, and includes the Comptroller and Legislative Auditor or their designees to the membership of the Council. These changes will allow the Council to complete its important work that was disrupted during COVID, provide much needed support to nonprofits seeking to provide services through State grants to Marylanders, garner the expertise needed to continue the work of the Council.

Creation of an Ombudsperson in the Governor's Office would expedite attention to and resolution of problems with the timely release and approval of grant announcements and agreements, payment terms and delays, and invoicing requirements. To illustrate how an Ombudsperson could assist with delays in the grant-making process, I offer you a recent example for a grant the MHA received **more than a year** after services were supposed to go live.

- RFP Issue Date - February 29, 2022
- Proposal Due Date - April 15, 2022
- Original Grant Period Start Date - July 1, 2022
- Actual Award Date - September 22, 2023
- Actual Grant Period Start Date - October 1, 2023

Nonprofits who are potential grantees are often reluctant to question Procurement Officers for fear of not receiving grant funding. An Ombudsperson would minimize this reluctance and provide Marylanders with the services they need.

Please give Senate Bill 459 a favorable report.

Building a strong foundation of emotional wellness