



Maryland Counseling Association, Inc. is a Branch of the American Counseling Association
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Del. Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
RE: **Support- HB146**

Dear HGO Chair Del. Pena-Melnyk:

The Maryland Counseling Association appreciates the efforts and legislation the HGO committee expends to protect and promote the well-being of Marylanders. The Maryland Counseling Association (MCA) continues to engage with our state elected officials who represent those who we serve as well as members of our professional body. Our membership of nearly 500 covers all counties throughout the state of Maryland.

As Maryland was the second state to sign the Counseling Compact, which now has 32 member states and continues to grow, our Maryland General Assembly understands the importance of license portability and equivalency. Mental health and wellness professionals are in high demand in a world plagued with natural and man-made disasters, violence, stressors, atrocities, traumas, and unfortunate circumstances. It is essential for efficacious work, to create a therapeutic alliance (a researched identified predictor of positive growth and change), and successful outcomes that a person is able to obtain counseling with a professional who is a good fit for the individual, family, or relationship seeking counseling services.

The Maryland Counseling Association strongly supports HB146 requiring reciprocity to include licenses and certifications of other jurisdictions to be substantially equivalent and reviewed by the Health Occupations Board. It is imperative to uphold the standards and requirements Maryland Department of Health has stipulated through the Maryland Code Annotated Health Occupations Article, Title 17 as well as COMAR chapters 7, 8, 12, and 17.

Additionally, we encourage the continued protection of those seeking counseling and the professional counselors of Maryland by ensuring reciprocity and substantial equivalency. HB 146 will continue to uphold ethical and legal guidelines for mental health services.

Sincerely,

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