



Committee: House Judiciary Committee

Bill: House Bill 575 – Criminal Procedure – Victim Compensation -Alteration (Victim Compensation Reform Act)

Hearing Date: February 6, 2024

Position: Favorable with Amendment

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) and the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) supports *House Bill 575 – Criminal Procedure – Victim Compensation – Alteration (Victim Compensation Reform Act)*. We are requesting a clarifying amendment related to type of health care providers who participate in the program.

We thank the Governor for introducing this much-needed reform measure to ensure that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is equipped to meet the health care and related needs of victims of crime. Maryland’s law provides for coverage of health care services to address the somatic, behavioral health, and oral health of victims who are uninsured.

Under the bill, qualified third-parties can certify that an individual’s health conditions are related to the crime. Under the existing bill, the list of third parties does not acknowledge the full range of health care providers who can diagnose and treat health care conditions, including behavioral health. The bill also incorrectly identifies social workers as case workers instead of licensed health care providers. Lastly, there is an outdated reference to “psychological” health, instead of the more current term of behavioral health. To clarify this section, we suggest the following changes on page 3 of the bill:

(G) “QUALIFIED THIRD PARTY” MEANS:

(1) ~~A LICENSED PHYSICIAN OR PSYCHOLOGIST AUTHORIZED TO PRACTICE UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE;~~ A HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER WHO IS:

(i) LICENSED, CERTIFIED OR OTHERWISE AUTHORIZED TO PRACTICE UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE; AND

(ii) PERMITTED TO DIAGNOSE A PHYSICAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INJURY UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE;

(2) A ~~SOCIAL WORKER OR~~ CASEWORKER OF ANY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE HEALTH OR SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY OR PROVIDER; OR

(3) AN ADVOCATE OR VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDER FROM A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION OR ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(H) "Victim" means a person:

(1) who suffers physical OR ~~PSYCHOLOGICAL~~ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH injury

We ask for a favorable report on the legislation with clarifying amendments. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.