

**Senate Finance Committee  
February 11, 2025**

**Senate Bill 458  
Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training  
\*\*\*SUPPORT\*\*\***

The National Association of Social Workers Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) represents over 2,700 social workers across the state. We are writing in strong support of Senate Bill 458 – Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training. This legislation is a critical step toward addressing health disparities and improving equitable care by requiring health professionals to complete training on implicit bias and structural racism as part of their first time licensure renewal requirement.

Structural racism perpetuates inequalities by systematically limiting access to opportunities and resources based on race that result in reinforcing disparities across generations, making it a significant public health issue. Research consistently shows that racial disparities in treatment and interventions contribute to worse health outcomes for marginalized communities. Systemic barriers, including unequal access to care, biased clinical decision-making, and historical mistrust, exacerbate disparities in all areas of health. Without intentional training, health care professionals may unconsciously perpetuate these disparities and these implicit biases result in structural racism against people and peoples of affected communities.

As social workers, we appreciate Maryland recognizing that thoughts bring actions and therefore deeply appreciate that House Bill 783 recognizes the connection that an individual's implicit bias can result in the expected outcome of structural racism. As a state committed to eliminating health disparities, Maryland must ensure that its health workforce is equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide equitable care to all residents. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 458 to support a fairer, healthier Maryland.

Respectfully,

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Executive Director  
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