



Committee: Senate Finance Committee
Bill Number: SB 458 - "Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training"
Hearing Date: February 11, 2025
Position: Favorable

The Maryland Nurses Association strongly supports Senate Bill 458, entitled "Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training." This bill mandates that individuals healthcare providers that are renewing their health occupation licenses and certificates complete a training program on implicit bias and structural racism. The program must be approved by the Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program. The goal of this bill is to improve cultural and linguistic competency among healthcare professionals by addressing critical issues in healthcare settings.

Implicit bias and structural racism, though related, are distinct concepts. Implicit bias is typically unconscious, subtle, and beyond an individual's direct awareness or control. In contrast, structural racism involves deliberate actions or systemic policies that result in explicit discrimination and greater harm on both individual and institutional levels. By requiring this training, the bill aims to equip healthcare professionals with the knowledge and awareness needed to mitigate both implicit bias and structural racism, ultimately fostering more equitable healthcare outcomes.

Key Provisions:

- 1. Training Requirement:** Beginning with the first license or certificate renewal after April 1, 2026, applicants must attest to completing an approved training program on both implicit bias and structural racism. Even if an individual has previously completed implicit bias training, they will still be required to complete the new Structural Racism Training to ensure comprehensive education on both issues. The University of Maryland will develop training that will be submitted to the Maryland Department of Health Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities for review and published to the respective website for free access.
- 2. Program Approval:** The Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program, in coordination with the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, will identify and approve training programs. Approved programs must be recognized by a health occupations board or accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education.
- 3. Definitions:** "Structural racism" is defined as a system of inherited institutional settings that provide differential opportunities based on race. "Cultural and linguistic competency" includes direct communication in the patient's primary language and understanding the roles of culture, ethnicity, and race in diagnosis and treatment.

MNA / University of Maryland School of Nursing Collaboration:

The American Nurses Association (ANA) has invested significantly in initiatives aimed at dismantling racism in nursing. In 2024, the Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) was selected as one of 12 state nursing associations nationwide to receive a grant dedicated to advancing

antiracism efforts. MNA is committed to addressing systemic racism in nursing and the broader healthcare profession. MNA has partnered with the University of Maryland School of Nursing DEI department to develop a web-based training program focused on systemic racism. This initiative is funded by the ANA grant and will be made available at no cost to healthcare professionals and organizations across Maryland. Healthcare organizations will have the flexibility to integrate the training into their competency programs as they see fit.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 458 is a crucial step towards addressing implicit bias and structural racism in healthcare. By mandating comprehensive training for healthcare professionals, this bill will help create a more equitable and just healthcare system for all.

MNA urges the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 458.

If you have any questions please contact MNA's lobbyist, Bill Kress at

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