

Written Testimony in Favor of SB 458 - Structural Racism Training

Thank you, Chair Senator Beidle, Vice Chair Senator Hayes, and all the members of the Finance Committee for addressing this critical health care issue of the impact of health disparities on successful health outcomes. The University of Maryland, School of Social Work appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of SB 458, which would add the topic of *structural racism* to the required training for health practitioners, including social workers. SB 458 is both timely and critical in addressing the persistent health disparities that continue to affect marginalized communities across our state.

In the 2021 legislative session, legislation passed establishing a requirement and the process for ALL health care professionals (including social workers) to complete implicit bias training as a condition of their license renewal. The Cultural & Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program, Office of Minority Health & Health Disparities, Maryland Department of Health has provided guidance and leadership to implement this important 2021 legislation. SB 458 would strengthen this law by including the topic of “structural oppression” to this training requirement.

The social work community is deeply committed to promoting social justice, advocating for vulnerable populations, and ensuring equitable access to essential services. The training proposed in SB 458 connects to our ethical obligations as social workers. Social workers across the state find themselves at the intersection of health care and social systems, where we witness firsthand the detrimental impact of implicit bias and structural racism on health outcomes. It is from this vantage point that we recognize the urgent need for SB 458. In the health care settings, implicit biases and structural racism can lead to:

- Differential treatment based on race;
- Misdiagnosis or delayed diagnosis of medical conditions;
- Unequal access to advanced medical treatments and procedures; and
- Lower quality of care for minority and marginalized populations.

The cumulative effect of structural racism contributes to significant health disparities, such as higher rates of chronic diseases, lower life expectancy, and increased morbidity and mortality among minority populations. Training health care professionals on structural racism is a critical step toward mitigating these disparities.

As a profession dedicated to social justice and health equity, we urge you to support this bill. By requiring training on structural racism, we can take a significant stride toward dismantling the barriers that perpetuate health disparities and ensure that every individual receives the quality care they deserve.

Respectfully submitted by



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cc: Senator Dawn Gile, sponsor of SB 458