

January 28, 2025

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and distinguished members of the Finance Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

SB174 enters Maryland into the Social Work Licensure Compact. The Social Work Licensure Compact would increase access to social workers by allowing reciprocity—social workers from other states can deliver care in Maryland and Maryland social workers would be able to deliver care to other states who are a part of the compact.

Serious shortages exist in the mental health professional workforce. The lack of providers exacerbates unmet needs and leaves more people without options for mental health care. It would be to the State's benefit to allow additional licensed social workers to practice in Maryland. The compact provides a tool for addressing workforce shortages—and with the severity of our workforce shortage, Maryland should utilize every tool in our toolbox to ensure access to mental health services.

By entering the compact, we are increasing the number of social workers in the State, who can, in turn, offer services to Marylanders who need them the most.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.