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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony in Support of SB0458 - Health Occupations – Structural Racism Training

This bill mandates that individuals renewing certain health occupation licenses and certificates complete a training program on implicit bias and structural racism. This program must be approved by the Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program. The bill seeks to improve cultural and linguistic competency among health care professionals by addressing these critical issues in health care 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 health care professionals with the knowledge and awareness needed to mitigate both implicit bias and structural racism, ultimately fostering more equitable health care outcomes.

Key Provisions:

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.

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.

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.

Key Provisions:

1. Training Requirement:

- Applicants for renewal of licenses and certificates must attest to completing an implicit bias and structural racism training program.
- The requirement applies to the first license or certificate renewal after April 1, 2026.

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 hundreds of thousands of dollars 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 health care 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 health care professionals and organizations across Maryland. Health care organizations will have the flexibility to integrate the training into their competency programs as they see fit.

Per the Fiscal Note, SB0458 would cause Maryland Department of Health (MDH) general fund expenditures to increase by a small, indeterminate amount in FY 2026 only for contractual assistance to identify and approve new training courses. Special fund expenditures for each health occupations board may increase in FY 2026 to the extent each board must update its licensing system to accept revised attestations.