

# **BROCATO & SHATTUCK CONSULTING**

**Date:** February 13, 2025

**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair

**Bill:** House Bill 745 – State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists – Behavior Analysts – Licensure Applications

**Position:** SUPPORT

On behalf of Acorn Health, we are here in strong support of House Bill 745. Acorn Health is a standard-setting family of ABA treatment providers. Our behavior analytic professionals develop, apply, and share the latest advances in the science of ABA, always focused on data and outcomes. Acorn Health providers combine proven best practices with pioneering, evidence-based next practices, engaging whole families. Acorn Health operates locations in Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Virginia.

As introduced, House Bill 745 "requires the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists to issue a license to practice behavior analysis to qualified applicants within 10 days of receiving the completed application; and requiring the State Board to provide a certain e-mail notification regarding the status of an application for a license to practice behavior analysis."

In communications with the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists they have indicated that licensing processing can take an average of 3 months, depending on the state of the application. The Board has stated that they only review applications after the application fee payment is processed and this review begins within 30 days of the payment being processed.

This extended timeline stands in stark contrast to recent improvements made by other Maryland health agencies. The Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration has recently implemented significant reforms to their licensing process, including a new online submission system launching February 10, 2025. Their comprehensive review included analyzing application volumes, comparing licensing practices across state healthcare agencies, and implementing new workflows to improve efficiency.

There is a well-documented demand for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services in Maryland. There are hundreds if not thousands of kids with autism who benefit from ABA therapy. Many remain on waiting lists for services due to a shortage of qualified and licensed staff.

The concern is especially focused on qualified BCBAs that have been submitting complete applications. The turnaround time in Maryland is much longer than in neighboring States. This in turn directly impacts the time a child must wait to begin receiving life-changing services. The sooner licenses can be approved, the sooner children with autism can begin therapy.

While we recognize that transitioning to more efficient systems requires careful planning, other Maryland agencies have demonstrated that modernization is both possible and beneficial. The BHA's recent implementation of an online licensing system shows that state agencies can successfully streamline their processes while maintaining quality standards.

House Bill proposes establishing a fixed timeframe for licenses to be issued. We understand the staffing pressures that are being felt by the Board, however it is a fundamental function, an obligation of the Board to review and process licenses in a transparent and timely fashion. It is critical for organizations such as ours to provide the services that are so desperately needed by children with autism and their families.

We ask for a favorable report on House Bill 745.

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