



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

Maryland Health Occupations Boards
4201 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

Maryland Board of Dental Examiners
Spring Grove Hospital Center, Rush Bldg.
55 Wade Avenue/Tulip Drive
Catonsville, Maryland 21228

Maryland Board of Nursing
4140 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

Maryland Board of Occupational Therapy Practice
55 Wade Avenue, Tuerk Bldg. – 2nd floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

2026 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: HB 771
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Support with Amendments

TITLE: HB 771 – Health Occupations - Human Trafficking Awareness Training

BILL ANALYSIS: This Bill will require each health occupations board to adopt certain regulations related to continuing education credits for a certain human trafficking awareness training program on or before January 1, 2027; and establishing requirements for the training program.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Maryland Board of Acupuncture, the Maryland Board of Chiropractic Examiners, the Maryland Board of Dental Examiners, the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners, the Maryland Board of Nursing, the Maryland Board of Occupational Therapy Practice, the Maryland Board of Examiners in Optometry, the Maryland Board of Physical Therapy Examiners, the Maryland Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners, and the Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (the “Boards”) respectfully

submit this letter of support with amendments for HB 771 Health Occupations - Human Trafficking Awareness Training.

The Boards support the intent of HB 771 and recognize the importance of human trafficking awareness training for healthcare professionals given their proximity to vulnerable populations. Though there is still much more to be done, in recent years patient safety networks have developed procedures for addressing human trafficking when they encounter it, and nursing education programs, as well as other health occupation professions, often address the topic in their curriculum. Furthermore, we believe continuing education (CE) on the most recent developments in addressing human trafficking in the healthcare arena is an important step to eliminating the practice in the State altogether.

However, despite its passage in the House, the Boards continue to have concerns regarding the regulatory mandate in this Bill. More specifically, requiring the Boards add an *optional, unmandated* course to their regulations could potentially cause confusion for licensees and stakeholders, and it will not increase the likelihood that licensees will take the course. The Boards vary in their existing CE structures, and so courses, not required by law, are typically not listed in regulations. These courses can change and having to go through the many months required to promulgate regulations for each change would be unreasonable and impractical. An alternative solution is for the Boards to post the accepted training on their websites as a part of the required outreach along with free accepted courses approved by the Department. No change to regulations would be required to implement this solution.

Therefore, the Boards respectfully encourages **two** amendments for the Committee's consideration. The first would remove the regulatory requirement for the Boards, since the sponsor amendment on page 2, line 9 seems to accomplish the goal of HB 771 to allow the human trafficking awareness training to count towards continuing education credits. The second amendment removes the deadline for completion of regulations by January 1, 2027. The specific amendments are below:

- Pg 2, strike line 17
- Pg 3, strike lines 17-19 in their entirety

For all of these reasons, the Boards submit this letter of support with amendments for HB 771 and urge that the Committee adopt these amendments. For more information, please contact Lillian Reese, Legislative Liaison for the Health Occupations Boards at 443-794-4757 or lillian.reese@maryland.gov or Mitzi Fishman, Director of Legislative Affairs for the Board of Nursing at 410-585-2049 or mitzi.fishman@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.