



February 17, 2026

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Government, Labor and Elections Committee
145 Lowe House Office Building
142 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, MD. 21401

RE: HB 612 - Correctional Education and Workforce Skills Training Programs – State Correctional Ombudsman and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to report FAVORABLY on HB 612.

The value of Certified Peer Support Services (CPSS) in serving individuals with both addiction and mental health struggles has long been established, and guidelines for the provision of those services within correctional settings were established federally in 2017 (SAMHSA, 2017). Since that time, there has been great effort in the field to refine and continue to build on the model, decreasing barriers to care for inmates and supporting the reentry process to decrease recidivism. As recently as last year, suggestions were made to continue to decrease barriers to care and to provide more opportunities for inmates to engage in the peer support process (Barrett *et. al*, 2025). This bill is a perfect example of those recommendations, offering training for inmates to become certified themselves. Offering incarcerated individuals this opportunity provides them with a clear pathway out of previous behaviors while simultaneously allowing them to use their existing leadership skills to help steer others to make positive changes before they even leave the institution.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 612. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D. at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
President

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs