



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

HB 1021 UNFAVORABLE

Health Occupations – Licensed Psychologists – Prescriptive Authority
Health Committee Hearing: March 4, 2026

The requirement to complete only 400 hours of psychopharmacological treatment is not adequate in comparison to other professionals with prescriptive authority. Psychologists do not receive clinical prescriptive experience in their 1-year post-doctoral clinical internship. By comparison, the number of recommended clinical hours for advanced-practice nurses rose from 500 to 750 in 2022 by the National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education. Even that training is also not adequate. Physicians often complete between 10,000 and 16,000 hours of clinical training.

The State Board of Examiners of Psychologists is unlikely to responsibly establish or fulfil this major new oversight responsibility. Many health professional boards in Maryland appear unable to keep up with their existing basic responsibilities. An April 2025 report detailed deficiencies within 20 Maryland boards and commissions that oversee and license practitioners. Thousands of licensee investigations, and 3,600 complaints against licensees, - the majority - remained open for over two years. ¹

Granting psychologists prescriptive authority is likely to worsen the problem of over-prescribing of certain drugs, for example, benzodiazepines for anxiety such as Xanax. Demand is high from patients who see them as a quick fix. National guidelines explicitly recommend against long-term use, but they are routinely prescribed long-term, and are difficult to discontinue. **Adding a new profession with inadequate pharmacologic training to those already prescribing these drugs is likely to exacerbate the problem.** “Quietly, we have become a nation on benzodiazepines.” ² Already, “current benzodiazepine prescribing patterns are concerning. . . they are widely overprescribed around the world.” ³ “There has been more advocacy and research in opposition to the indiscriminate, widespread, and long-term use” of these agents, . . . referred to as ‘our other prescription drug problem’.” ^{4,5} Over 9 percent of American adults, or more than 21 million people, reported benzodiazepine use in 2023; they have contributed to overdose deaths. ⁶

Respectfully,

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