



February 18, 2026

**House Health Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB 598 – Physicians - Licensing - Internationally Trained Physicians

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 598 - Physicians - Licensing - Internationally Trained Physicians. This bill would give the State Board of Physicians the option to license doctors who were trained outside of the United States under certain conditions. This would expand the state’s available physician workforce, including the psychiatry workforce, without sacrificing any quality of patient care.

Maryland faces a severe behavioral health shortage. A 2024 report commissioned by the Maryland Health Care Commission concluded that the state was lacking 32,800 behavioral health workers that would be needed by 2028 to address our behavioral health challenges. This included an estimated shortage of 269 psychiatrists. The primary recommendation made in the report to address this shortfall is an expansion of the psychiatry residency and fellowship program at a cost of \$7.5 million.¹ BHSB support this recommendation, but the state should also pursue other policies that would expand the psychiatry workforce.

SB 380 could expand the number of physicians and psychiatrists practicing in Maryland and help address our behavioral health workforce challenges. The bill would accomplish this with minimal administrative burdens. SB 380 includes proper safeguards to ensure physicians and psychiatrists with medical licenses from other countries are in good standing with proper training and education.

Maryland needs additional physicians and psychiatrists. We should not turn away medical professionals who are willing to work here due to their medical license country of origin. **We urge the House Health Committee to support HB 598.**

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142

References:

¹ Maryland Health Care Commission. *Investing in Maryland’s Behavioral Health Talent*. October 2024. Available at: https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/plr/plr/documents/2024/md_bh_workforce_rpt_SB283.pdf