



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 4, 2026

**Testimony in Support of SB 568/HB 1021  
Health Occupations - Licensed Psychologists - Prescriptive Authority**

Good Afternoon Madam Chair and fellow members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present **HB 1021 Health Occupations - Licensed Psychologists - Prescriptive Authority** for your consideration.

The intent of HB 1021 addresses the critical shortage of mental health providers in Maryland by authorizing the Board (State Board of Examiners of Psychologists) to certify prescribing psychologists. It does not allow every psychologist to have prescriptive authority. This bill would allow only qualified professionals to manage drugs customarily used in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of individuals with psychiatric, mental, cognitive, nervous, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorders.

*The Problem*

Maryland is facing a systemic crisis of access, especially regarding mental health resources. According to a study by the Mental Health Association of Maryland, there are pervasive disparities in access to in-network mental health care. Patients are often forced to choose between waiting months for an appointment or paying unreasonably high out of pocket expenses. They are 9 times more likely to have to pay out of pocket for behavioral health care compared to physical health care, more than twice the national average.<sup>1</sup> Federal data from HRSA indicates that as of 2025, over 1.1 millions Marylanders live in Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas.<sup>2</sup>

HB 1021 will work to expand the pool of “authorized prescribers” in Maryland to include licensed psychologists who have met rigorous, postdoctoral requirements. This will work to address the need for a more responsive and robust mental health workforce. By allowing qualified individuals to manage both therapy and medication we eliminate the need for the referral loops, which currently leaves patients stranded.

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<https://www.mhamd.org/news/new-study-finds-continuing-pervasive-disparities-in-access-to-in-network-mental-health-and-substance-use-care/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas>

### *Addressing Misconceptions*

1. Psychologists lack the medical background to prescribe safely.
  - This bill does not grant prescriptive authority to all psychologists. It creates a specific "Prescribing Psychologist" certification. Candidates must have extensive educational requirements including a certification in specific education programs recognized by the board. This is followed by a Postdoctoral Fellowship requiring at least 400 hours of supervised treatment of 100 diverse patients. We are not bypassing medical education, rather requiring specialized targeted medical proficiency.
2. Psychiatrists will lose their jobs
  - This is not a zero sum game. We have a massive surplus of patients where psychiatrists in Maryland are currently overwhelmed, often with month long waiting lists. HB 1021 does not replace psychiatrists, but rather creates a force multiplier. By allowing psychologists to manage routine medication , we free up psychiatrists to focus on the most complex cases that require their extensive and specific medical degrees. In states that have already passed similar legislations, New Mexico and Louisiana, there is no evidence of psychiatric unemployment.
3. This bill will allow psychiatrist to operate unsupervised
  - HB 1021 establishes a Prescriptive Authority Advisory Committee. This body ensures interdisciplinary oversight by not only psychologists but a licensed physician from the State Board of Physicians and a licensed pharmacist from the State Board of Pharmacy. Implementation and oversight will be a collaborative effort across boards.

Currently, the Health Occupations Article recognizes dentists, podiatrists, and advanced practice nurses as authorized prescribers. By adding psychologists to this list we are utilizing a highly trained workforce that is already on the front lines of the mental health crisis, but is currently hindered by an inability to provide comprehensive medical management. By passing HB 1021 we are giving Marylanders in crisis a faster and more accessible path to address their needs.

I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration,



Delegate Jennifer White Holland