



Committee: Senate Finance Committee & Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Bill Number: Senate Bill 550
Title: Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Establishment
Hearing Date: February 23, 2021
Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) strongly supports *Senate Bill 550 – Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans - Establishment*. This bill establishes a grant program within the Maryland Department of Health to expand community behavioral services to veterans and their families.

Until recently, federal rules from the Department of Veterans Affairs and TRICARE had a patchwork of provisions restricting licensed clinical professional counselors from providing behavioral health services to veterans and their families, exacerbating the lack of availability of behavioral health providers. Through the advocacy of licensed clinical professional counselors, these federal rules were recently clarified, expanding behavioral health services.

As such, LCPCM has a strong history of advocating for the expansion of behavioral health services to veterans and their families; and we strongly support the availability of state-funded services to address the unique behavioral health needs of veterans and their families when federal services are not available.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Rachael faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or 410-693-4000.