



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 164

Title: Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid

Hearing Date: March 23, 2021

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *Senate Bill 164 – Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid*. This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to provide Mental Health First Aid training to veterans and their immediate family members on how to identify and respond to signs of behavioral health disorders.

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

As such, LCPCM has a strong history of advocating for the expansion of mental health services to veterans and their families; and we strongly support the availability of Mental Health First Aid training to this population. This will prove especially helpful for those that either cannot access services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or are otherwise reluctant to seek mental health treatment.

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.