



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



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TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Christine K. Krone
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DATE: February 8, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 283 – *Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 283.

Senate Bill 283 establishes a Behavioral Health Workforce Investment Fund to reimburse for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals. Funding is left discretionary, initially, to allow for a required workforce needs assessment that will (1) determine the immediate, intermediate, and long-term unmet need and capacity of Maryland's behavioral health workforce; (2) calculate the total number of behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals needed over the next 5, 10, and 20 years; and (3) make very specific findings and recommendations regarding the types of workforce assistance programs and funding necessary to meet the needs across all sectors of the behavioral health workforce.

The above-mentioned organizations support Senate Bill 283, which aims to address the critical shortage facing the Maryland behavioral and mental health workforce. In 2020, the Behavioral Health Administration contracted with the University of Maryland, Baltimore's Systems Evaluation Center to conduct a survey and collect data to learn more about recruitment and retention issues within the behavioral health workforce across the State¹. Among hiring administrators, survey results indicated **low salary** and **not enough applicants** as the top two reported hurdles for recruitment. And staff, who provide direct care or services, responses indicated **burnout** and **low salary** were the top two reported reasons for staff to consider leaving both their agency and the behavioral health field altogether. To address this alarming data, the fund established in the bill gives behavioral health providers who utilize the fund a tool for recruitment and retention of behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals. We urge a **favorable** report.

¹ Behavioral Health Organization (2020, September 4). *Maryland Behavioral Health Workforce Survey – Results Summary*. Maryland Department of Health. Retrieved February 6, 2020, from <https://health.maryland.gov/bha/Documents/Workforce%20Survey%20Summary%20distribution9.4.20%20%282%29%20%282%29.pdf>