



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 283 - Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established - Letter of Support as Amended

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for Senate Bill (SB) 283 – Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established. SB 283 establishes a non-lapsing fund to provide reimbursement for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals. Additionally, SB 283 will require the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC), in coordination with the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and other interested stakeholders, to conduct a comprehensive behavioral health workforce needs assessment.

Behavioral health conditions, both mental health and substance use disorders, impact millions of people in the United States.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic and continuing opioid crisis have had a considerable impact on the demand for behavioral health services and there is a challenge in recruiting and maintaining behavioral health workers.² MDH appreciates the General Assembly's interest in establishing a fund to provide reimbursement for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals. MDH supports the language in SB 283 establishing flexibility of the money appropriated to the funds and will work closely with the Maryland Department of Budget and Management to determine the level of funding that is sufficient to carry out the intent of this legislation.

If you have any questions, please contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs, at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

¹ Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. (SAMSHA) <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt35325/NSDUHFFRPDFWHTMLFiles2020/2020NSDUHFFR1PDFW102121.pdf>

² United States Government Accountability Office. Behavioral Health: Available Workforce Information and Federal Actions to Help Recruit and Retain Providers. GAO-23-105250. October 27, 2022. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105250>