



## Maryland Community Health System

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>House Health and Government Operations Committee</b>
<b>Bill:</b>	<b>House Bill 628 – Health Occupations – Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists – Reciprocal Licensure Requirements</b>
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	<b>February 8, 2024</b>
<b>Position:</b>	<b>Support</b>

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The Maryland Community Health System (MCHS) supports *House Bill 628 - Health Occupations – Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists – Reciprocal Licensure Requirements*. The bill will streamline the Maryland licensure process for out-of-state marriage and family therapists (MFTs).

MCHS is a network of federally qualified health centers that provide somatic, behavioral, and oral health services to underserved communities. Almost every jurisdiction in Maryland is in a federally recognized HPSA for behavioral health providers.<sup>1</sup> Our health centers are located in the areas with the most severe shortages of behavioral health providers, and they are struggling to meet the growing behavioral health needs of their patients.

We support this legislation because it will streamline the licensure process for MFTs from other states. For our health centers, it will open up the potential pool of qualified applicants to fill our growing list of vacant positions for behavioral health providers. There are only 300 MFTs in Maryland, yet there are about 72,000 MFTs nationwide.

With a change in federal law last year, MFTs and licensed professional counselors (LCPCs) can now bill Medicare. We wanted to emphasize this point, as we now have an opportunity to expand our behavioral health services for older adults by recruiting more MFTs and LCPCs. Unlike LCPCs, however, MFTs do not have an interstate licensure compact. We need an avenue, as provided in this legislation, to be able to expand the number of MFTs who are able to practice in Maryland.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

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<sup>i</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>