



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 16, 2023

To: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, House Health & Government Operations
Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 291- Health Occupations - Clinical and Graduate Alcohol and
Drug Counselors - Licensure

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health
systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 291.

HB 291 aligns the credentialing process for licensed clinical and alcohol drug counselors and
licensed graduate alcohol and drug counselors with other professions that the Board of
Professional Counselors and Therapists regulates.¹ Streamlining the licensure and credentialing
process can reduce administrative barriers and support the health care workforce.

There is a growing need for behavioral health services in the community. Between 2013 and
2021, emergency department visits for behavioral health conditions climbed from 10.5% to
18.3%. Patient acuity also increased—meaning, there were more patients turning to emergency
departments in crisis, and they were sicker when they got there.²

Hospital emergency departments are often the first point of contact or the facility of last resort
for individuals suffering from a behavioral health crisis. Patients and families turn to an
emergency department for care when they cannot find treatment in the community or when the
condition worsens.

Maryland is facing a critical staffing shortage across health care occupations. MHA's [2022 State
of Maryland's Health Care Workforce report](#) outlines a roadmap to ensure Maryland has the
health care workforce it needs now and into the future. Removing barriers to licensure is critical
to expand Maryland's workforce pipeline. Legislation like HB 291 is a model for how health
occupations boards can reduce barriers and support the health care workforce.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 291.

For more information, please contact:
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¹ Senate Bill 14 [Fiscal and Policy Note](#)

² HSCRC Case Mix Data