



Maryland
Hospital Association

January 31, 2023

To: The Honorable Melony G. Griffith, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Re: Letter of Support- Senate Bill 14- Health Occupations - Clinical and Graduate Alcohol and Drug Counselors - Licensure

Dear Chair Griffith:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 14.

SB 14 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 SB 14 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 SB 14.

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

² HSCRC Case Mix Data