

**The Maryland Department of Health's
Responses to the DLS FY 2019 Health Professional Boards & Commissions
Analysis**

February 19, 2018 (House) and February 26, 2018 (Senate)

Both of these boards [Board of Nursing and Board of Social Work] should comment on the factors related to the declining rate of completed investigations. (pg. 3, 7)

Board of Social Work Examiners

The Board of Social Work Examiners' (Board) complaint processing declined because the Board has only two investigators. One is in a PIN and the other is contractual. The investigator in the PIN was on sick leave from Aug. 2017 – February 12, 2018. The Board currently has both investigators working and is in the process of hiring another contractual investigator to help with the backlog.

Board of Nursing

The Board currently has 10 FTEs for investigations but has experienced significant turnover. Three individuals retired last year (one of those was the Director) and four investigators either departed the state or moved to another agency. FMLA also impacted the investigation staff.

It is difficult to attract experienced nurses to be investigators in this demanding position (each investigator has nearly 300 open cases assigned) at the current salary. Additionally, offering contractual positions rather than permanent PINs adds to the challenge of retention.

We are recruiting for vacancies in the investigation department as well as the renewal department. We can, and will, be hiring contract employees but they, like all new state hires, will need training before they can make a maximum impact.

MDH, as well as the board [of Professional Counselors and Therapists], should comment on their efforts to secure the personnel recommended within the report. (pg. 3, 12)

The Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists has taken the recommendations in the Sunset review extremely seriously and is actively implementing them. Among them is the suggestion that the Board increase its staff to assist in the backlog of cases and address new ones as they arise. The Board has begun the recruitment process for contractual positions. It is the Board's hope that PINs can be secured to convert these positions to full-time, permanent employees as a way to incentivize and retain qualified individuals.

The department should comment on which other boards are joining in this project [Integrated Board Licensure System], why only some boards are going to be involved if this is truly going to be an enterprise project, and on the availability of financing for this project, including whether or not funds from other participating boards may be used to finance the enterprise information technology system. (pg. 3, 13)

There are currently five Boards pursuing and preparing fiscally for the Enterprise System:

- **Board of Nursing**
- Dental Board of Examiners
- Board of Morticians
- Board of Pharmacy
- Board of Professional Counselors

The Board of Nursing is vigorously pursuing the RFP with guidance from MDH. It is anticipated at the present time that the Board of Nursing will be the initial implementing Board, with the other four Boards mentioned above joining in a second 'wave'. It is also anticipated that, after successful implementations, additional Boards will likely adopt and implement the new system.

The Board of Nursing cannot absorb the entire cost for this program nor will it be responsible for the administration of the program for other boards that want to utilize the new IT program.