

Senate Bill 493
Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

March 3, 2021

Favorable with Amendment

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports the work of the Community Health Resources Commission and urges the committees to reject the BRFA action to reduce its funding.

Inspired by the gospel mandates to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth, individuals, and families each year, we recognize the importance of access to healthcare.

Each day, Catholic Charities staff interact with Marylanders facing challenges and difficulties, those challenges and difficulties that have only escalated during the Pandemic. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems, including inequitable access to health care.

Catholic Charities has partnered with the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) on numerous projects over the past 10 years. We have seen firsthand the transformative effect a grant from the CHRC can have on a program.

- CHRC grants to our Esperanza Center allowed us to leverage an additional \$821,000 in private grants. This funding allowed the health center to completely revamp their model of care while expanding service delivery.
- A separate behavioral health grant allowed us to increase the services we provide in our outpatient mental health centers to include substance use services and medication assisted treatment. As the opioid crisis is exacerbated by the pandemic, we are now positioned to serve the whole person rather than send them down the street for treatment of their substance issues. The grant specifically helped us to train over 200 clinicians to be able to identify and treat substance use disorders.
- In October, a CHRC grant allowed us to open an on-site primary health care clinic at My Brother's Keeper in partnership with St. Agnes Ascension Health. The new clinic provides primary care for the treatment for acute illness and chronic disease, including diabetes. This is part of a larger effort to support implementation of the Maryland Diabetes Action Plan.

The CHRC grant process allows programs like ours to work outside the constructs of Medicaid funding to build capacity in underserved communities. It occupies a unique role in our healthcare system where innovative projects are seeded and capacity built. The proposed cuts to CHRC funding will be detrimental to the communities we serve.

Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to reject the BRFA action to reduce funding for the Community Health Resources Commission. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy