



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

February 18, 2021

Senate Bill 499: Prohibition on Vending Machine Sales of Drugs and Medicines – Repeal
Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 499. HFAM represents over 170 skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as nearly 80 associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction in the state and provide the majority of long-term and post-acute care in Maryland.

Senate Bill 499 would repeal the prohibition on the sale, distribution, and disposal of certain drugs, medicines, pharmaceutical preparations, and medical preparations by means of a vending machine or similar device.

Vending machines of over-the-counter and some prescription medicines are relatively common in other parts of the world and even other states, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. Similar to food deserts in these areas, residents of these communities also experience a lack of access to pharmacies. Medicines purchased through these vending machines are not only more convenient, but they generally cost less than traditional pharmacies. Better access to prescription medicine can often result in better health outcomes, thus reducing overall health costs and even hospital readmissions.

As I have often shared, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the unequal access to healthcare in this country, among both those providing and receiving care, and especially in communities of color and among those who are economically disadvantaged. Together, we must do better in serving these communities and this legislation is a start.

I admired the late Kaiser Permanente CEO Bernard Tyson, who said about the intersection of healthcare disparity and public policy, “Such a small part of healthcare actually happens in the doctor’s office.” He was right.

For these reasons we request a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 499.

Submitted by:

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