

**Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis  
Regarding Health Equity Resource Communities – Modifications (HB906)  
Before the Health and Government Operations Committee:**

To Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I am in strong support of HB906 – Health Equity Resource Communities- Modifications. This bill alters provisions relating to Health Equity Resource Communities (HERCs). It requires the Chesapeake Regional Information System for our Patients (CRISP) to provide technical assistance to the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (MCHRC) in executing HERCs. HB906 will delay the date that MCHRC must issue a request for proposals (RFP) to designate HERCs from October 1, 2022, to October 1, 2023. Finally, it will also expand the purpose of the HERC Community Reserve Fund to include the funding of two full-time MCHRC staff positions in 2022 and the costs from CRISP providing technical assistance to MCHRC in the fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

Last year, we led a bipartisan effort to address health disparities here in Maryland. The Maryland Health Equity Resource Act provided new resources to address health inequities, improve health outcome, and reduce avoidable hospital costs. This act became law this past spring and the Commission has worked with the new HERC Advisory Committee to develop the first RFP, the Pathways to Health Equity. Under Pathways, the Commission was able to grant 9 awards across Maryland: 3 in Prince George’s County, 3 in Baltimore City, and 3 across rural Maryland. I appreciate the diversity reflected in the Commissions grant recipients as this shows the ability of this program to address health disparities across Maryland.

The Pathways RFP generated 40 proposals requesting \$42 million. These modest adjustments, with no fiscal impact, would give the CHRC more time to evaluate the proposals received, and help the implementation of a vital new program. HB906 will allow Maryland to continue our fight to reduce health disparities across the state and assist HERC’s implementation across our state.

For these reasons I urge a favorable report.