



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY
SB1005
SENATOR JOANNE C. BENSON
FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTERS GRANT
PROGRAM-ACQUISITION OF LAND

Good afternoon, Chair Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Mark Chang and Esteemed Committee Members

I come before you today to express my unwavering support for Senate Bill 1005. This critical legislation authorizes the Board of Public Works, on the recommendation of the Secretary of Health, to make grants under the Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) Grant Program for the acquisition of land for the construction or use of FQHCs.

Federally Qualified Health Centers are essential to the well-being of our most underserved populations. They provide comprehensive, high-quality healthcare services to individuals and families who might otherwise go without essential medical care. By expanding the scope of the FQHC Grant Program to include the acquisition of land, SB1005 will make a transformative impact on the healthcare landscape of our state.

The urgency of this legislation cannot be overstated:

1. **Critical Access to Healthcare:** The expansion of FQHCs will ensure that more Maryland residents, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare services. This is not merely a healthcare issue – it's a fundamental matter of equity and justice.
2. **Economic Revitalization:** The establishment of new health centers will create jobs, stimulate local economies, and breathe new life into communities. The economic upliftment will benefit businesses and residents alike, fostering a cycle of growth and prosperity.
3. **Addressing Health Disparities:** By promoting health equity, SB 1005 will help bridge the gap in healthcare access for marginalized and underserved communities. It is our moral obligation to ensure that every resident has access to the healthcare they need and deserve.

4. **Preventive Care and Cost Savings:** FQHCs focus on preventive care and managing chronic diseases, which significantly improves health outcomes and reduces long-term healthcare costs. Expanding FQHCs will create a healthier and more resilient population.

This legislation is not just a policy change; it is a bold and necessary investment in the health and well-being of our communities. It represents an opportunity to address critical gaps in our healthcare system and to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of equity, justice, and human dignity.

In conclusion, I passionately urge a favorable vote for SB 1005 from the members of the Finance Committee. This legislation is a profound commitment to building a healthier, more equitable future for all Maryland residents.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.