



January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Testimony of Laura Hale  
American Heart Association

**Support of SB 94 Maryland Medical Assistance Program- Self Measured Blood Pressure Monitoring**

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association extends its support for SB 94.

As a state, Maryland has already taken key steps in the management of hypertension through the passage of SB 244 in 2022. This legislation extended coverage for those on Medicaid to better monitor and get their blood pressure under control. This legislation looks to take the next step, by targeting key demographic groups to extend coverage for Self-Measured Blood Pressure Monitoring. Pregnant and Postpartum individuals are at increased risk for hypertension and monitoring of those individual by their doctors can save countless lives.

In addition, those on Medicaid have additional burdens that can make management and diagnosis of hypertension even more difficult. This legislation begins to bridge the gap for those with Medicaid who are at risk to develop hypertension; increasing access to blood pressure devices and additional clinical support.

This issue is extremely personal for me; I was home from the hospital 3 days from the birth of my daughter when I started not to feel right. I had a horrible headache, was so tired, and just felt off. I initially was about to write it off as exhaustion of new motherhood, but because I work for the American Heart Association I thought I should check my blood pressure just in case. I had a device at home and my blood pressure quickly showed that I was in an extremely unsafe zone. My husband rushed me to the hospital while my mother stayed home with my newborn daughter. I had developed postpartum preeclampsia, a life-threatening complication of high blood pressure that can lead to stroke and potentially death. I would not be here today if I had not had that blood pressure monitor at home.

The research literature has shown that, when combined with additional clinical support, Self-Measured Blood Pressure (SMBP) is effective in reducing hypertension, improving patient knowledge, improving the health system process, and enhancing medication adherence<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the day, this means that people are living longer and healthier lives by managing their blood pressure at home with clinical support.

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<sup>1</sup> Uhlig K, Patel K, Ip S, Kitsios GD, Balk EM. Self-measured blood pressure monitoring in the management of hypertension: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Ann Intern Med.* 2013;159(3):185–194.

The healthier lives that participants in Medicaid will have from the state's investment in SMBP will ultimately lead to cost savings in the future. The fiscal note details this investment but fails to account for the cost savings that will occur through having a healthier population. This legislation is a key investment for our most at risk population.

. The American Heart Association urges a favorable report on SB 94.