

5-March, 2025

Dear Delegate Patterson,

My name is Jasmin Baker, a young adult living with sickle cell disease. I am writing to express my full support of **HB 1306: “Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Specialized Clinics and Scholarship Program for Medical Residents”**.

Living with sickle cell disease presents many challenges, not only due to the physical and emotional toll it takes but also because of the significant barriers I face in accessing timely and appropriate care. One of the most pressing issues I’ve encountered is the distance I must travel to receive medical attention. I have to travel to Baltimore, which is about an hour away, just to receive care. The travel is time-consuming, impacting my work, finances, and overall well-being.

As a teacher, my days are already full, and taking time off from work is not always an easy option. I often have to miss a full day of teaching to travel for treatment, which not only causes me to lose income but also disrupts my students’ learning. This loss of income is a burden that I have to deal with every time I need treatment. Additionally, the cost of traveling such a distance—whether for gas, parking, or public transportation—adds up over time and becomes an extra financial strain. It’s difficult to maintain a balance between caring for my health and managing the financial responsibilities that come with it.

Another complication in my healthcare journey was the transition from pediatric to adult care. At 18, I found myself caught between two states as I was an out-of-state college student. Transitioning from pediatric care, where my mom was my primary caregiver, to adult care was not smooth. There were no transitional programs available nearby, so I had to navigate this shift without much guidance. For someone who was balancing the demands of college and trying to manage my own health, this was a difficult and overwhelming process. I had to take over the responsibility for my health while dealing with the pressures of college life, all without adequate resources to help with the transition. I was essentially left to figure things out on my own.

There are times when I am not feeling well, and I have to make the difficult decision about whether to miss a full day of work to travel to Baltimore for treatment. Many times, I choose to forgo the trip in order to avoid the hassle and cost of traveling, only to suffer the consequences of not receiving the care I need. This decision weighs heavily on me, as it’s a constant battle between taking care of my health and fulfilling my professional responsibilities. The lack of easily accessible care near where I live means that I have to make these tough choices regularly, and often the right decision is unclear.

What I wish for is simple: a care center, such as an infusion center, nearby where I can receive the necessary treatment without the need to travel long distances. Having a local facility where I can get care would not only save me time and money but also reduce the emotional burden of making these decisions. I believe there should be more healthcare systems around Maryland where people with sickle cell disease won’t have to travel such a great distance for care.

Specifically, there should be facilities that cater to the needs of sickle cell patients of all ages, particularly those in the process of transitioning from pediatric to adult care.

The lack of accessible care for sickle cell patients is not just an inconvenience—it's a barrier to proper health management. We need more programs and resources that support those with sickle cell, especially for those transitioning into adult care. With the right infrastructure, sickle cell patients would be able to get the treatment they need in a timely and convenient manner, which would ultimately lead to better health outcomes and a higher quality of life.

Sickle cell patients deserve access to care that is not only effective but also accessible. Having more local care centers and support systems would make a world of difference for people like me, who are just trying to manage their health while balancing the other demands of life. This is my story, but it's one that many others with sickle cell disease can relate to. We need better support, more accessible resources, and a healthcare system that recognizes the unique challenges we face. I fully believe that **HB 1306: "Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Specialized Clinics and Scholarship Program for Medical Residents"**, is an important step forward to ensure that patients like me will have more accessible and effective care while simultaneously balancing the demands of life and a debilitating illness like sickle cell disease.

Sincerely,

Jasmin Baker

Sickle Cell Warrior