

HOUSE BILL 1617

J1, L2

6lr1146

By: Delegates Alston, Coley, Harrison, Ivey, Roberson, Roberts, Taylor, and Toles
Toles, Bagnall, Cullison, Guzzone, Hill, S. Johnson, Kaufman, Lopez,
Martinez, Rosenberg, Ross, Taveras, White Holland, and Woorman

Introduced and read first time: February 19, 2026

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

Re-referred to: Health, February 26, 2026

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 9, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Health – Health Innovation Zones – Establishment**

3 FOR the purpose of authorizing the local zoning authority in a county to designate a health
4 innovation zone if an area meets certain criteria; requiring a county, if the local
5 zoning authority designates a health innovation zone, to establish, by law, certain
6 incentives; requiring the Prince George’s County Council to designate a health
7 innovation zone in certain areas; authorizing the Prince George’s County Council to
8 designate additional health innovation zones in certain areas; ~~requiring~~ authorizing
9 the Governor, subject to the limitations of the State budget, to include an
10 appropriation in the annual budget bill for the Maryland Economic Development
11 Corporation to encourage certain entities to locate in a health innovation zone in
12 Prince George’s County; exempting certain entities from local zoning and land use
13 laws; and generally relating to health innovation zones.

14 BY adding to

15 Article – Health – General

16 Section 20–14A–01 through 20–14A–04 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 14A.
17 Health Innovation Zones”

18 Annotated Code of Maryland

19 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
2 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

3 **Article – Health – General**

4 **SUBTITLE 14A. HEALTH INNOVATION ZONES.**

5 **20–14A–01.**

6 IN THIS SUBTITLE, “HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE” MEANS A CONTIGUOUS
7 GEOGRAPHIC AREA THAT:

8 (1) DEMONSTRATES MEASURABLE AND DOCUMENTED HEALTH
9 DISPARITIES AND POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES, INCLUDING HIGH RATES OF:

10 (I) MATERNAL HEALTH COMPLICATIONS;

11 (II) NEWBORN HEALTH COMPLICATIONS; AND

12 (III) CHRONIC AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES;

13 (2) IS POPULATED BY:

14 (I) COMMUNITIES OF COLOR;

15 (II) COMMUNITIES WITH LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS;

16 (III) COMMUNITIES WITH A HIGH IMMIGRANT POPULATION; OR

17 (IV) ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES; AND

18 (3) IS SMALL ENOUGH TO ALLOW FOR THE INCENTIVES UNDER THIS
19 SUBTITLE TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES AND
20 REDUCING HEALTH DISPARITIES, INCLUDING RACIAL, ETHNIC, GEOGRAPHIC, AND
21 DISABILITY-RELATED HEALTH DISPARITIES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES.

22 **20–14A–02.**

23 (A) SUBJECT TO § 20–14A–03 OF THIS SUBTITLE, THE LOCAL ZONING
24 AUTHORITY OF A COUNTY MAY DESIGNATE A HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE IF THE
25 AREA TO BE DESIGNATED:

26 (1) IS A FOOD OR HEALTH CARE DESERT;

1 **(2) HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF:**

2 **(I) CANCER;**

3 **(II) DIABETES;**

4 **(III) HEART DISEASE; OR**

5 **(IV) HYPERTENSION; AND**

6 **(3) HAS A LOW PREVALENCE OF GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES,**
7 **PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS.**

8 **(B) IF A LOCAL ZONING AUTHORITY OF A COUNTY DESIGNATES A HEALTH**
9 **INNOVATION ZONE UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, THE COUNTY SHALL**
10 **ESTABLISH, BY LAW, INCENTIVES THAT WILL BE PROVIDED TO GROCERY STORES,**
11 **PHARMACIES, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS THAT**
12 **LOCATE IN THE HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE.**

13 **20-14A-03.**

14 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
15 **INDICATED.**

16 **(2) “MEDCO” MEANS THE MARYLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
17 **CORPORATION.**

18 **(3) “PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY BLUE LINE CORRIDOR” HAS THE**
19 **MEANING STATED IN § 10-601 OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARTICLE.**

20 **(B) THIS SECTION APPLIES ONLY TO PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY.**

21 **(C) THE PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY COUNCIL SHALL DESIGNATE A**
22 **HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

23 **(1) PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY BLUE LINE CORRIDOR; AND**

24 **(2) THE AREA LOCATED WITHIN 2 MILES OF THE BORDER BETWEEN**
25 **PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

26 **(D) THE PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY COUNCIL MAY DESIGNATE**
27 **ADDITIONAL HEALTH INNOVATION ZONES IF THE AREA TO BE DESIGNATED:**

1 (1) IS A FOOD OR HEALTH CARE DESERT;

2 (2) HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF:

3 (I) CANCER;

4 (II) DIABETES;

5 (III) HEART DISEASE; OR

6 (IV) HYPERTENSION; AND

7 (3) HAS A LOW PREVALENCE OF GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES,
8 PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS.

9 (E) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2028, THE GOVERNOR ~~SHALL~~ MAY,
10 SUBJECT TO THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STATE BUDGET, INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL
11 BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION ~~OF AT LEAST \$5,000,000~~ TO MEDCO TO
12 ENCOURAGE GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND
13 SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS TO LOCATE IN A HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE
14 ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.

15 (F) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2028, MEDCO SHALL PROVIDE FUNDING TO
16 ENCOURAGE GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND
17 SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS TO ESTABLISH A BUSINESS IN A HEALTH INNOVATION
18 ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.

19 (G) MEDCO SHALL LOOK FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES TO
20 ENCOURAGE HEALTH INNOVATION BUSINESS GROWTH IN A HEALTH INNOVATION
21 ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.

22 **20-14A-04.**

23 A GROCERY STORE, PHARMACY, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER, AND SPECIALTY
24 CARE PROVIDER LOCATED IN A HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER
25 THIS SUBTITLE ARE NOT SUBJECT TO LOCAL ZONING OR LAND USE LAWS.

26 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
27 October 1, 2026.