

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 882

(Delegates Kaufman and Taveras)

Health

**Consumer Health Information - Termination Date and Mandatory Funding for
the State's Consumer Health Information Hub - Repeal**

This bill repeals the June 30, 2026 termination date for the State's Consumer Health Information Hub and the \$350,000 mandated appropriation to the hub. Instead, the hub must operate to the extent funding is available. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect governmental operations or finances, as discussed below.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local governmental operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 679 of 2022 designated the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub. The purpose of the hub is to promote and ensure public access to accurate, consistent, evidence-based, plain-language information in preferred languages to inform decisions about health, safety, and social services benefits. For fiscal 2024 through 2026, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$350,000 to the hub. Chapter 679 terminates June 30, 2026.

The hub must (1) protect and promote public health by engaging with State and local government agencies and specified entities; (2) establish and promote health literacy

criteria, certifications, and best practices; (3) identify health literacy challenges and provide recommendations on how to address the challenges; (4) monitor and report on the use of health literacy and plain-language initiatives and support public reporting of vital public health information; and (5) support the identification and ongoing training of health literacy officers in State and local agencies.

The hub must also (1) facilitate consistent State and local government use of health literacy and plain-language criteria; (2) support workforce development; (3) assist programs and organizations to promote community health literacy; and (4) develop and publish criteria for evaluating whether media or a media campaign follows best practices for the promotion of health literacy. The hub may collaborate with entities that directly educate the public, including education institutions, libraries, and consumer referral services.

MDH and the hub must encourage persons that promote public health, health education, or health awareness to submit media for evaluation by the hub. If a person submits its media or media campaign to the hub for review, the hub must use specified criteria to evaluate whether the media or media campaign follows best practices for the promotion of health literacy.

The hub submitted a [2024 report](#) and a [2025 report](#) to the General Assembly on the status of statewide health literacy efforts.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill removes the termination date for the hub and the hub's \$350,000 mandated appropriation. As the hub is scheduled to terminate at the end of fiscal 2026, the fiscal 2027 budget as introduced does not include funding for the hub. The bill specifies that the hub must continue its functions to the extent funding is available.

As required by Chapter 679, the fiscal 2024 through 2026 budget bills included \$350,000 for the Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy to operate the hub. The University System of Maryland (USM) advises that funding for the hub supported free training for public health and health care professionals, reviews of public-facing materials, networking and information-sharing events, and creation of policies and procedures to better serve the public with plain language and translated information. USM further advises that the Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy will continue to support hub operations, but further progress and growth will be difficult absent the mandated appropriation.

The Department of Legislative Services notes that, although the bill requires the hub to continue to operate to the extent funding is available, there is no material fiscal impact associated with the bill.

Additional Comments: The Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy (part of the University of Maryland School of Public Health) advances research in health

communication and health literacy and translates that research into education and community action that improves health for all.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; University System of Maryland; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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