



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 5, 2020

House Bill 409 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Participation of School-Based Health Centers - Regulations

POSITION: SUPPORT

Delegate Cullison, Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 409 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Participation of School-Based Health.

This legislation would require the Maryland Department of Health on or before January 1, 2021, to revise its regulations regarding school-based health centers that may participate in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to include school-based health centers that have a written agreement with a sponsoring agency that meets certain requirements identified by the State Department of Education in the version of the "Maryland School-Based Health Center Standards" report available December 1, 2019; etc.

In Maryland's small rural communities, oftentimes School-Based Health Centers are the only touch point for providing preventive and primary care to the community's youth. This great need is exacerbated with children with chronic diseases that require frequent check-ups with a provider. Rural School-Based Health Centers provide the services needs to fill this gap in access.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that "many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure." (West's Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

Support of these programs is vital and MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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