

February 19, 2020

Testimony on HB 609
Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Health
Health and Government Operations

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 609 which would create the Maryland Office of the Inspector General (IG) for Health, an independent unit of the state charged with keeping track of the Health Departments activities, investigating fraud and waste of certain funds, regulatory changes, and various other tasks.

Currently, the Maryland Department of Health has an Inspector General in it's Department. However, this bill will make the IG an independent unit. This change makes the investigative process more nonpartial and objective.

The inspector general of any agency is charged with finding and investigating fraud, waste, and abuse of the system. The office is designed to act as an impartial arbiter of the facts, existing outside traditional chain of command and above internal power struggles that exist in any bureau, agency, or office setting. The concern for the Maryland Health Department is that because it's IG is inhouse, the IG may be too familiarly acquainted with the people of the department. Familiarity can lead to bias. By creating an independent office, HB 609 will ensure is that the IG for the Maryland Health Department is not biased or partial in it's decision making the office independent.

Additionally, this legislation requires an annual report by the Office's activities investigating fraud and waste of certain funds, referrals to the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, recoveries of mistaken claims paid in error, recoveries of the cost of benefits mistakenly paid, and regulatory changes. This requirement will help hold the department accountable to best practices, as well as, providing transparency for Marylanders.

Because we strongly believe that Government needs real accountability to run fairly, we support HB609 and urge a favorable report.