February 25, 2020

RE: HOUSE BILL 837: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

The Collaboration Council, Montgomery County's Local Management Board, is focused on improving outcomes for our county's children and youth. Our Early Care and Education Initiative provides services that are designed to reduce family risk factors and enhance protective factors.

High-risk families enrolled in our Healthy Families Montgomery (HFM) program receive services before the baby's birth and continue until the child is three years old. Through HFM, we target low-income first-time parents and offer home visits and early intervention parenting support to ensure that first time parents in Montgomery County begin their families successfully.

In 2018, the Maryland Department of Health Vital Statistics Administration, reported that black women accounted for 54% of infant deaths in Maryland, while they only accounted for 33% of live births. Statistics are mirrored in Montgomery County, where black women accounted for 48% of infant deaths, while they only accounted for 32% of live births. Implicit Bias training would address one of the root causes of this epidemic, and could significantly decrease the preventable deaths of infants among at-risk populations. Infant mortality and morbidity are preventable outcomes. Research has shown that concerns of black women are often ignored or dismissed by health care professionals, implicit bias training is essential to correct this preventable outcome.

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Collaboration Council in support of House Bill 837, Public Health - Maternal Mortality and Morbidity - Implicit Bias Training and Study. I encourage you to give a favorable report to this bill.

Thank you

Terrill North
Executive Director

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