



House Bill 1417

Dialysis Patient Transportation Fund and Task Force to Study the Dialysis Patient Transportation Fund

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

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From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1417 as it establishes a fund and task force to address the pressing and costly issue of dialysis patient transport.

The growing demand for dialysis transport and stagnant state and federal funding to cover costs have put a strain on local governments' ability to provide this service to residents who rely on it. This type of transport is particularly challenging and costly for counties to provide as patients require multiple direct curb-to-curb trips per week to treatment centers on precise schedules. This is very different than the fixed routes that are typical for other transit services provided by counties. Dialysis centers and their patients rely on these transports free of charge—forcing counties to shoulder the mounting costs.

HB 1417 establishes a Dialysis Patient Transportation Fund (the Fund) to help fully or partially offset the direct costs counties incur to provide transportation for dialysis patients to and from treatment. The fund is supported in part by a \$20 per transport fee paid by certain kidney dialysis providers to the Department of Transportation as well as money appropriated by the state budget, interest earnings, and any other funding source accepted by the Fund.

Additionally, the bill creates a task force to study the impacts the Fund has on patient access to dialysis treatment and fully or partially offsetting the direct costs counties incur to transport dialysis patients to and from treatment at kidney dialysis centers. The task force is also charged with making recommendations regarding the amount of the transport fee and the effects of the transport fee on the dialysis centers, as well as whether the fee should be altered to adequately offset the direct costs counties are incurring.

Counties believe this task force would help refine the Fund and ensure the resources to support county costs to provide dialysis transports are being adequately collected and provided. MACo welcomes the opportunity to serve on this body.

HB 1417 creates a reasonable funding mechanism with task force oversight to address urgent county dialysis transport funding needs. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1417.