



Maryland Community Health System

Committee: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Bill Number: SB 172 - Maryland Health Equity Resources Act

Hearing Date: January 27, 2021

Position: Support with Amendments

Maryland Community Health System (MCHS) supports the underlying concepts of *Senate Bill 172 – Maryland Health Equity Resources Act*. Maryland should invest in communities struggling because of inequitable resources and the impact of institutionalized racism. MCHS was a participant in the workgroup on the legislation that established health enterprise zones, the concept upon which this bill is based. We believe the legislation before you is a strong start. We raise some questions for consideration as the Committee moves forward:

- Incorporating Local Planning Entities: Since the HEZ pilot, Maryland has invested considerable resources into Local Health Improvement Coalitions (LHICs). Can LHICs play a more formal role in the Health Equity Resource Communities?
- Supporting Essential Community Providers and Other Community-Based Organizations: Is the bill structured so that smaller, community-based organizations are receiving sufficient support? We want to support investment in organizations that are traditionally under-resourced.
- Investment in Other Equity Initiatives: We understand that the Maryland General Assembly will be considering investment in other health equity initiatives in the next couple of years. These initiatives could include extending postpartum Medicaid coverage and improving access to oral health services. Should funding be reserved for those initiatives or a greater investment in substance use disorder services? In an ideal world, there would be sufficient funds to fully resource all these initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. We are committed to working with the Committee and other stakeholders as you work on this legislation and other health equity initiatives. We have not developed specific amendments at this time, as we want to work collaboratively with all stakeholders on . If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

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