Testimony
for the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
In **SUPPORT** of

Senate Bill 172 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

January 27, 2021

The League of Life and Health Insurers of Maryland Inc. supports Senate Bill 172 and urges the committee to give the bill a favorable report.

Thanks to the great work of the Maryland General Assembly, Maryland is one of America's leading states in expanding health care and improving public health, including by adding over 400,000 people to the ranks of the insured under the Affordable Care Act. But, as you know, despite this progress, health inequities continue to plague our state causing black and brown communities to suffer from substantially inferior health care outcomes. The ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic has dramatically heightened these inequities. We commend the work done on this issue by the President's Equity Task Force led by Senator Melony Griffith and we thank that task force for urging action in this area during the 2021 Maryland General Assembly Session.

The League believes that one of the best ways to reduce health inequities and improve health outcomes is by building on the successes of the 2012-2016 Health Enterprise Zones (HEZ) which as the Equity Task Force found were very successful in the five zones created under that program. SB 172 replicates and builds on this success by authorizing the Secretary of Health to establish Health Equity Resource Communities across the state which, like the old HEZ's, would fund community developed plans to put resources and medical and public health plans into disadvantaged areas of the State.

The League and its members believe that we can and should do better to address all health inequities, and SB 172 is a step in the right direction to help address problems that are not new and cannot be ignored. For these reasons, we urge the committee to give Senate Bill 172 a favorable report.