

## SB 172 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

Position: *Support*

### Bill Summary

SB 172 establishes a Health Equity Resource Community Advisory Committee. It establishes procedures for applying to become designated as a Health Equity Resource Community and it establishes a Health Equity Resource Community Reserve Fund.

### Bill Rationale

MedStar Health is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, for a better health care system, and on behalf of providers, to help them provide the best care possible. MedStar Health acknowledges that racial inequities create impediments to reaching those ends. Although we have advocated to eliminate injustice and inequity in health care, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought further, and deeper, issues to light that simply cannot be allowed to persist any longer.

Across Maryland, gaps in health are large, persistent, and increasing—many of them caused by barriers set up at all levels of our society. It's hard to be healthy without access to good jobs and schools and, safe, affordable homes. Health equity means increasing opportunities for everyone to live the healthiest life possible, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they make.

We support funding the Health Equity Resource Communities through a one cent per dollar increase in the state alcohol beverage sales tax. Raising the state's alcohol beverage sales tax in 2021 will generate necessary funds to create and provide continuous funding to the Health Equity Resource Communities and create more community-based prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs to address substance use and mental health disorders.

It is imperative that we work together to help eliminate the significant social, cultural, physical, and economic barriers that continue to impede communities of color and others from obtaining quality care. The provisions of the Maryland Health Equity Resources Act builds on the progress of the Affordable Care Act by providing additional investments to create a sustainable, cost-effective health care system that is rooted in fairness, justice, and equal opportunity.

We thank you for your steadfast commitment to achieving health equity for all.

For the reasons above, we ask that you give SB 172 a *favorable* report.