



**Testimony before Health and Government Operations & Ways and Means
House Bill 463: Maryland Health Equity Resource Act**

****SUPPORT**
February 2, 2021**

The National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) requests your support for House Bill 463: Maryland Health Equity Resource Act. This bill would reduce health disparities by requiring the Secretary of Health to designate certain areas as Healthy Equity Resource Communities and improve access to primary care, promote prevention services, thereby reducing the need for hospitalizations and the inherent costs of high-end care. The bill would also authorize tax credits for certain health care providers and organizations.

NASW is the largest national organization of social workers, representing over 120,000 social workers nationally. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social Workers from across the state of Maryland who work with communities of color have firsthand knowledge of the damage caused by inadequate health care resources from those they serve. One of the goals of the Grand Challenges for Social Work is to have a socially-oriented model of healthcare that breaks down and removes the root causes of health inequity and promotes upstream interventions and primary care prevention that will eradicate the gap that exists for marginalized populations

HB 463 will empower communities to reduce the health disparities that have impacted people of color for far too long. This has been especially highlighted within the past year, as we have witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic impact Black and Brown communities harder than White communities.

NASW-MD urges you to support HB 463 and create a safer, more inclusive Maryland. Thank you for all you do to reach a healthier Maryland.

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