



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 565- Public Health- Data- Race and Ethnicity Information

Position: *Support*

February 16, 2021

Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 565.

SB 565 would improve collection of health data stratified by race and ethnicity—delivering information to help achieve health equity in our state. The bill requires the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD) to coordinate with the Department of Health and Maryland Health Care Commission to assess data annually to inform the Office's programs. It also requires health occupation boards to collect data, which will show the racial and ethnic composition of Maryland's health workforce.

Meaningful public policy that improves health equity and builds a diverse health care workforce requires access to robust, accurate, and Maryland-specific data. Past efforts to improve data collection on health outcomes, quality, and patient satisfaction by race were not coordinated or sustainable. SB 565 rectifies this misalignment and empowers OMHHD to carry out its mission.

In the past, the focus has been to gather data to improve outcomes for patients. Less work has been done to track the racial and ethnic makeup of our health care workforce. Building a workforce that reflects the communities hospitals serve is critical to improve the health and wellbeing of all Marylanders. SB 565 requires all health occupations boards to include an optional question on new license applications and renewals and requires the boards to encourage licensees to provide this information. This data can guide programs to increase the diversity of our health care heroes.

COVID-19 makes it impossible to deny or ignore historic health disparities. OMHHD needs to have all available data to ensure the right targeted programs and policies are in place to advance the health of all Marylanders.

For these reasons, we encourage a favorable report on SB 565.

For more information, please contact:

Erin Dorrien, Director, Government Affairs & Policy

Edorrien@mhaonline.org