



## **Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association**

To the Environment and Transportation Committee

February 9, 2021

House Bill 58 Workgroup on Minority Homeownership, Neighborhood Revitalization, and Household Wealth Equity

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, Delegate Lierman, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 58 Workgroup on Minority Homeownership, Neighborhood Revitalization, and Household Wealth Equity.

MRHA supports this legislation that will inform on the creation of wealth-building opportunities for minority households and promote community revitalization through targeted investments in homeownership.

Rural communities suffer from lack of economic development, infrastructure investment, and structural health inequities. This bill would provide data driven solutions to provide quality housing, and community and economy development that will lead to better health outcomes for these communities.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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