



**Maryland
Public Health
Association**

Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy

Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

**SB0005 Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the
Committee: Finance
Hearing Date: 2/2/21
Committee: Health and Government Operations
Position: SUPPORT**

Thank you Chair, Senator Kelley and Vice Chair, Senator Feldman, for the opportunity to submit this testimony in SUPPORT of SB0005: “Public Health-Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities”.

On behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association, we wish to stress the value of this important public health legislation because it would provide critical data and insight into the establishment of thoughtful, evidence-based programs that address some of the real disparities that exist for Black and Brown communities and lower income communities in the State of Maryland.

The impact of implicit bias on health care has been well documented and acknowledged since the Healthy People 2000 report. The problem has received greater national attention during this pandemic as Black patients (for example) die from COVID-19, 37% more often than White patients of the same age. Shedding light on health and racial disparities and the underlying reasons why they exist is essential. Yet, in Maryland, we have no way to clearly identify, track, and then rectify the problem.

The National Institute of Health and many other leading health-based organizations have prioritized eliminating health care disparities within their top five most critical initiatives for health care practitioners. To do this, we must directly discuss, record, and track how biases, stereotypes, and discrimination may contribute to health disparities. Implicit or unconscious-bias training combined with data tracking by race, ethnicity, and other social determinants of health is the only way to identify and overcome these striking problems and create more equitable population health outcomes.

We appreciate that SB0005 creates a standardized, well-funded effort to address this foundational problem directly and with scientific integrity and training. We support SB0005 and HB0028 and the important insights it would provide.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.