



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

February 2, 2021

Senate Bill 5 Public Health - Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, Senator Griffith, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 5 Public Health - Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities.

MRHA supports this legislation that provides funding to the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD) to publish, to a certain extent, health data that includes race and ethnicity information collected by the Office, allows the Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program to identify and approve certain implicit bias training programs.

This legislation supports and empowers the OHMMD to continue to dismantle the barriers that contribute to racial and health disparities in communities across Maryland. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health disparities experienced by communities of color especially which is compounded by additional rural challenges. This legislation would be a powerful step forward to addressing these disparities. All Marylanders deserve access to data driven solutions to health and racial disparities during the pandemic and beyond.

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.

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.

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

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