



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 796 (Senator Eckardt)  
Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and Maryland Health Care  
Commission – Reporting Requirements  
Finance Committee  
FAVORABLE**

March 3, 2021

To Chairwoman Kelley and Esteemed Members of the Finance Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in support of Senate Bill 796. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just, and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders.

The work performed by the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD) has proven to be of great importance to all Marylanders. Their mission of addressing social determinants of health and eliminating health disparities helps achieve the goal of providing health equity to all Marylanders, allowing them to access health care services and the ability to maintain good health. We believe collaboration between the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) is a positive way to hold these entities accountable for providing accessible health care to Marylanders.

Senate Bill 796 would expand the Health Care Disparities Policy Report Card to include all Maryland health occupations. In 2010, the OMHHD and MHCC released a [Health Care Disparities Policy Report Card](#), which exposed that Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and American Indians or Alaska Natives were all underrepresented in the physician workforce. Furthermore, from this report, racial and ethnic groups are drastically underrepresented in Maryland medical schools' graduating classes. To address these disparities, we implemented a four-year plan to address these issues, which further contributes to the people of color's adverse health outcomes in Maryland<sup>1</sup>. With this foundation of reporting, the expansion of applicability to additional licensed health care occupations is necessary because physicians are not the only health care providers responsible for delivering health care services. According to the [Maryland Hospital Association](#), Maryland employs 108,000 doctors, nurses, and caregivers, which provide care to millions of patients annually. With this information, it is evident that the Health Care Disparities Policy Report Card should include all healthcare system providers since they serve significant contributions in keeping Marylanders in good health.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DHMH/OMHHD/MPEMHD\\_2010-2014.pdf](http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DHMH/OMHHD/MPEMHD_2010-2014.pdf)

COVID-19 has exposed the serious health disparities that persist in Maryland; it's evident that people and communities of color in the state are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes compared to their white peers and white communities. By expanding the applicability of our current health disparities law, there is a new opportunity to take a deeper look into the healthcare system and address the areas where the state is falling short.

Senate Bill 796 is an important step forward in making Maryland's healthcare system more just and equitable by holding all of Maryland's health care providers accountable with reporting, eliminating the burden of health disparities in the future. Strong Future Maryland urges the committee to vote favorably on Senate Bill 796.

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland,

*John B. King*

*Alice Wilkerson*

*Rachelle Wakefield*

Founder & Board Chair

Executive Director

Policy Intern