



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: March 10, 2021

RE: HB1276 Maryland Emergency Management Agency –
Emergency Planning and Management Cultural Competency – Study

The MLLC supports HB1276 Maryland Emergency Management Agency – Emergency Planning and Management Cultural Competency – Study.

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1276.

Maryland has some of the most diverse [cities](#) in the country. Individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life call our state “home.” While Maryland may value diversity, this past year’s state of emergency indicates that this sentiment is not enough for many communities. Some of our most diverse areas have [suffered](#) the hardest during these challenging times.

The growing diversity in Maryland and the staggering [COVID-19 health disparities](#) demonstrates the need for inclusive and culturally competent approaches for disaster plans, response, and recovery. We cannot assume one method works for a multitude of residents. No populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, disabled individuals, and low socioeconomic families should be marginalized or misunderstood, especially during times of crisis. Communities of color and immigrant families have been an afterthought in emergency readiness and response for too long. Regardless of the nature of the crisis, families who are at a disadvantage should have direct access to both critical emergency information and resources.

HB1276 requires the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to study and make recommendations on best practices and model policies to address emergency responder training for culturally sensitive inclusion of minority communities in State and local emergency plans and management. MEMA will also conduct a survey of State and local government organizations for emergency management to ascertain current emergency planning strategies that address the needs of diverse communities. This is our opportunity to be better prepared for every Marylander during the next crisis.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB1276.