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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 78

Public Health - Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021)

Before the Health and Government Operations Committee

By Stephanie Klapper, Deputy Director, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.
January 26, 2021

Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 78, which would create a Maryland Commission on Health Equity that would study health disparities, including investigating the impact of a variety of socioeconomic factors on health. Systemic racism is a public health crisis.^{1,2} The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed these health inequities by race and ethnicity in our state,³ and highlighted the need to address them. The seriousness of the issue requires the immediate attention of our State in order to ensure that we are taking measurable steps to reverse this trend. The Commission HB 78 takes an important step forward in improving equitable health care delivery in Maryland. Thank you again to the committee for your recognized efforts toward improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. We urge a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 78.

¹ Feagin J, Bennefield Z. Systemic racism and U.S. health care. *Soc Sci Med*. 2014 Feb;103:7-14. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.09.006. PMID: 24507906.

² Brondolo E, Gallo LC, Myers HF. Race, racism and health: disparities, mechanisms, and interventions. *J Behav Med*. 2009 Feb;32(1):1-8. doi: 10.1007/s10865-008-9190-3. Epub 2008 Dec 17. PMID: 19089605.

³ Mann, D. A. Health Equity and COVID-19 Data in Maryland. Maryland Department of Health. 2020 Jul. <https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Documents/Maryland%20COVID-19%20Data%20By%20Race%20and%20Ethnicity%20July%202020%20pp.pdf>