Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 18, 2021

House Bill 780 Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – State–Based Young Adult Health Insurance Subsidies Pilot Program

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Kerr, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 780 Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – State–Based Young Adult Health Insurance Subsidies Pilot Program.

MRHA supports this legislation that would establish and implement a State-Based Young Adult Health Insurance Subsidies Pilot Program to provide a means for young adults to reduce the amount they pay for health benefit plans in the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

In economically disadvantaged rural communities across Maryland, this legislation would relieve financial stress on many young adults, allowing them to participate in the state's economy at higher rates.

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.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

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.

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

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