



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB 463 – Health Equity Resource Act

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

I am pleased to announce my support for legislation to create Health Equity Resource Communities across the state. There have been long-standing health disparities in communities across our state, which has now been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The type of health care received should never be based on geographic location or socioeconomic status.

The Health Equity Resource Communities will work to reduce health disparities and improve health and life outcomes in communities that need critical support. The Health Enterprise Zones pilot program helped improved the healthcare outcomes and quality of life of Marylanders between 2012 and 2016. This 2021 policy proposal would create a dedicated funding stream to mitigate healthcare access gaps and ensure health improvements can be leveraged across the state and for years to come.

I believe that one of the best ways to reduce health inequities and improve health outcomes is by building on the successes of the 2012-2016 Health Enterprise Zones which as the Equity Task Force found were very successful in the five zones created under that program. HB 463 replicates and builds on this success by authorizing the Secretary of Health to establish Health Equity Resource Communities across the state which, like the old HEZ's, would fund community developed plans to put resources and medical and public health plans into disadvantaged areas of the State.

I look forward to working with my fellow County Executives, members of the Howard County Delegation, their colleagues in the General Assembly and community leaders across the state to support this initiative. I commend the hard work that has gone in to establish the Health Equity Resource Communities Maryland desperately needs to address the long-standing health inequities in our state.

I urge your support of the Health Equity Resource Act and the creation of equitable, affordable health outcomes and opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive