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**HB 309 Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information  
SUPPORT**  
**House Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**January 26, 2021**

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. I am Karen Kalla, Executive Council Member and lead advocacy volunteer for AARP MD. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, encompassing almost 850,000 members. **AARP MD overwhelmingly supports HB 309 Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information.**

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

HB 309 requires the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities to collaborate with the Maryland Health Care Commission to serve as a clearing house and resource library for information on minority health and health disparities, data, strategies, services, and programs to advocate for improvement of minority health care. It enables the Department to work with other public and private entities to establish forums, programs, or initiatives to educate the public regarding minority health and health disparities with an emphasis on disease prevention and healthy lifestyles. It provides funding and grants to community based organizations and historically black colleges and universities to conduct research and evaluate projects for targeted at-risk racial and ethnic minority populations

The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has exposed the vast shortcomings within our health system and the critical importance of affordable health coverage and care for all *people* and *all families*. These shortcomings result in large part from structural and systemic inequality based on race and ethnicity begun with the founding of our country. We need to deal with these issues of the past that despite good intentions, continue to deny far too many people, equal and effective health care and opportunity.

AARP  
Real Possibilities

We know that public health education can empower individuals to better understand what constitutes good health and healthy lifestyles. Yet understanding alone is not enough—they still need access to the resources and programs necessary to achieve those goals. HB 309 creates a wide-ranging foundation and infrastructure to analyze the healthcare needs of minority individuals and their communities and most important, to take actions that address these needs with innovative and culturally sensitive programs and personnel. Central to these efforts, it supports the review and revision of laws to ensure equitable health care for minorities.

All of these provisions address critical aspects of the state's comprehensive effort to advance the health and prosperity of its diverse peoples and communities along with HB28 and HB78. For these reasons, AARP supports HB 309.

For questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan [tbresnahan@arp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@arp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.