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HB 309 – Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information

Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of House Bill 309. This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (the Office) to include the racial and ethnic composition of individuals who hold a license or certificate under the Health Occupations Boards in its the Health Care Disparities Policy Report Card. It also requires that all Health Occupations Boards include an option for applicants to provide race and ethnicity information on the application for the license, certificate, or renewal. Lastly, the Office, in coordination with the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) and MDH, are required to establish, submit to the General Assembly, and implement a plan to improve the collection and access to up-to-date health data that includes race and ethnicity information.

CareFirst is focused on driving the transformation of the health care experience with and for our members and communities and we are committed to advancing equity and inclusion in healthcare delivery. Currently, significant challenges and opportunities exist to improve the collection, access, and use of robust race and ethnicity data. To make a meaningful impact on reducing health disparities in local communities, bold actions are needed to make racial and ethnic health disparity data available, so that healthcare stakeholders, including health plans, can use this data to prioritize and design targeted interventions. CareFirst believes that House Bill 309 is an important step in the right direction by improving the data collection process and making race and ethnicity health data, including for the healthcare workforce, available to the public.

CareFirst strongly supports the policy goals advanced by House Bill 309. We look forward to partnering with legislators, health departments, public health groups, and other stakeholders to improve data collection, address barriers to data transparency, and identify appropriate use of race and ethnicity health data to advance health equity.

We urge a favorable report.

About CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

In its 83rd year of service, CareFirst, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a not-for-profit healthcare company which, through its affiliates and subsidiaries, offers a comprehensive portfolio of health insurance products and administrative services to 3.4 million individuals and employers in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. In 2019, CareFirst invested \$43 million to improve overall health, and increase the accessibility, affordability, safety and quality of healthcare throughout its market areas. To learn more about CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, visit our website at www.carefirst.com and our transforming healthcare page at www.carefirst.com/transformation, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#).