



City of Havre de Grace

711 PENNINGTON AVENUE, HAVRE DE GRACE, MARYLAND 21078
WWW.HAVREDEGRACEMD.COM

410- 939-1800
410- 575-7043

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support HB 936 – Hospitals and Freestanding Medical Facilities - Closing or Partial Closing - Public Notice

Madam Chair and The Honorable Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The City of Havre de Grace supports House Bill 936. If passed, the legislation would require the Maryland Health Care Commission to notify local governments and the public about the closing or partial closing of hospitals or free-standing medical facilities.

In April of 2020, the Maryland Health Care Commission voted to close Harford Memorial Hospital in Havre de Grace and open a free-standing medical facility in Aberdeen. At no point did the Maryland Health Care Commission send notice to the City of Havre de Grace or publish a notice in a locally available media publication regarding the April 2020 meeting.

It would be an understatement to say that the Citizens of Havre de Grace were shocked to learn on short notice that the Maryland Health Care Commission was going to vote to close their hospital in the midst of a pandemic without adequately serving the community with public notice.

The City believes that all municipal governments and the people they serve should have equitable access to information and have a voice in the process when it involves the closure of emergency healthcare facilities in their neighborhoods.

Since learning firsthand of the lack of transparency and limited community participation involved in the decision to close a hospital, the City has been a strong advocate for statutory and regulatory changes to remedy this problem.

On January 19, 2021, the City testified in favor of house bill 390 (University of Maryland - Harford Memorial Hospital Closure - Economic Impact Study), legislation intended to increase transparency and engage community stakeholders during the deliberations to close a local hospital. Unfortunately, HB 390 received an unfavorable report because of confusion and misinformation surrounding what is known as the Cushman and Wakefield study. The University

of Maryland Upper Chesapeake conducted this study to look at the property's highest and best uses. After repeated requests by the City, the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake continues to refuse to share a copy of the Cushman and Wakefield study with the Mayor and City Council of Havre de Grace.

It is unfortunate that such medical institutions, which are granted state-sanctioned monopolies, are given the ability to shield information that would otherwise benefit the public and local governments, who are only seeking to limit the adverse economic impact which will surely result from the hospital closure.

HB 936 is one of many steps the Maryland General Assembly needs to take to ensure that Marylanders are able to voice their opinion about their healthcare.

The City of Havre de Grace urges the committee to give House Bill 936 a favorable report.

City of Havre de Grace

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Oppose - HB 1079 – Admissions and Amusement Tax - Exemption - Activities That Promote Health and Physical Well-Being.

Chair Kaiser and the Honorable Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

The City of Havre de Grace opposes House Bill 1079. If passed, the legislation would prohibit a county or municipal government from imposing the admissions and amusement tax on gross receipts derived from any charge for participating in an activity that promotes health or physical well-being or for admission to an establishment that offers activities that promote health or physical well-being.

The lack of clarity and the open-ended scenarios the bill creates is a matter of great concern for the City of Havre de Grace and likely for many local governments throughout Maryland.

As written, the bill does provide some specific examples of what activities could meet the standard for promoting health and physical well-being. However, the legislation as a whole falls short of setting a suitable definition of what constitutes an activity that promotes health and physical well-being.

If passed by the Maryland General Assembly, House Bill 1079 would eliminate all revenue the City receives from the admissions and amusement tax, creating a budget shortfall of \$88,300. As a municipality with approximately 15,000 Citizens, the loss of this revenue would have substantial consequences on government operations, likely causing the City to raise its real property tax rate in order to avoid any reduction of City services, including public safety, trash collection, park maintenance, and roadway infrastructure maintenance.

The City of Havre de Grace urges the Committee to give HB 1079 an unfavorable report.