



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

January 26, 2021

House Bill 28 Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Lewis, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 28 Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

This legislation would require the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities to publish, to a certain extent, health data that includes race and ethnicity information collected by the Office and to provide updates at least every 6 months; require the Governor, beginning in the fiscal year 2023, to include an appropriation of at least \$1,788,314 in the annual budget bill for the Office; require the Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program to identify and approve certain implicit bias training programs; etc.

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.

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.

MRHA supports this legislation and the attention to addressing the social determinants of health. As stated above, rural Marylanders shoulder unique barriers to health, and this legislation would provide a data driven approach to understand and form a foundation to better achieve health equity.

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

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