



Bill No: HB463  
Title: Maryland Health Equity Resource Act  
Committee: Health and Government Operations  
Hearing: February 2, 2021  
Position: SUPPORT

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The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW's purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **HB463 a priority on the 2021 MLAW Agenda and we urge your support.**

HB463 would create Health Equity Resource Communities which would be geographic locations in the state with poor health outcomes that compete for grants, tax incentives, and health care provider loan repayment assistance to increase access to culturally competent care and ultimately reduce health inequities; funding for the Communities, as well as programs to address substance use and mental health disorders, will come from a one penny per dollar increase in the state alcohol beverage sales tax starting in 2021.

Health inequities based on race, ethnicity, disability and place of residence persist throughout the state, as shown in maternal and infant mortality rates and other measures. Inequities are stark at the intersection of gender, race, and location. In Maryland, black mothers die due to pregnancy 4 times more than white mothers, with the disparity continuing to widen over time. The infant mortality rate for Black non-Hispanic infants is 2.5 times the rate for White non-Hispanic infants, with rates worse for rural black infants than urban black infants.

Health Equity Resource Communities would improve health equity, including for women. Communities would compete for grants, tax incentives, and health care provider loan repayment assistance to reduce disparities, including by race and gender, and improve health equity. Funding for the Communities, as well as programs to address substance use and mental health disorders, would come from a one penny per dollar increase in the state alcohol beverage sales tax starting in 2021. Unlike the Health Enterprise Zones pilot which ended after 5 years, money raised by the alcohol tax for the Health Equity Resource Communities would go directly into a dedicated fund for the program to help ensure longevity. This funding would also help create new mental health and substance use disorder programs. In addition to generating much needed funds, the tax itself will save lives and lower health care costs by reducing underage drinking, binge drinking, driving under the influence, and sexually transmitted infections, just like what happened after the last alcohol sales tax increase in 2011. Binge drinking comes with health risks and binge drinking rates are currently rising faster for women than men.

**For these reasons, MLAW strongly urges the passage of HB463.**

**Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**  
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**MLAW's 2021 Agenda is supported by the following organizations:**

AAUW Anne Arundel County  
AAUW Easton Branch  
AAUW Kensington Rockville Branch  
American Association of University Women (AAUW) Maryland  
Anne Arundel County NOW  
Baltimore NOW (National Organization for Women)  
Bound for Better, Advocates for Domestic Violence Survivors  
Business and Professional Women Maryland  
Calvert County Commission for Women  
Cambridge Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
Charles County Commission for Women  
Church Women United  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Annapolis Alumnae Chapter  
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Hug Don't Shoot  
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Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Maryland Family Network  
Maryland Justice Project  
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  
Maryland NOW  
Maryland Women's Heritage Center  
Mission 50  
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Montgomery County Commission for Women  
Montgomery County NOW (National Organization for *Women*)  
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club  
Montgomery County Young Democrats  
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women., Inc. Anne Arundel County Chapter  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County Chapter  
Prince George's County Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.  
Reproductive Justice Inside  
Stella's Girls Inc.  
The Rest Of A Life (TROAL)  
Top Ladies of Distinction  
Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Patuxent River Chapter  
Top Ladies of Distinction, Prince George's County Chapter  
UAW Local 1183  
WISE  
Women's Equality Day 2020 Celebration Coalition  
Women's Law Center of Maryland

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