



CARE BRAVELY

HB78 – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021)
House Health and Government Operations Committee

January 26, 2021

Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations, LifeBridge Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in strong **SUPPORT** of HB78 – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021). LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

Maryland is fortunate to have a generally strong economy, but many communities still struggle with economic and resulting social challenges. Access to adequate transportation, affordable housing and educational opportunities, healthy food and environments free of violence is still an issue in many communities. These “social determinants of health” impact residents’ health in myriad ways, resulting in unequal access and disparate health outcomes. In fact, in our own communities, lifespan can differ by nearly 20 years from one neighborhood to the next. And the impact of systemic racism in exacerbating these inequities will be considered as policies are debated and programs established to address this core principle.

LifeBridge Health operates health care facilities in some of the most challenged communities in Maryland, especially in Park Heights and West Baltimore sections of Baltimore City. Focusing on these social determinants is a key aspect of our population health strategy, and we are partnering with community organizations, payers such as CareFirst and government to address these issues holistically. The Maryland Commission on Health Equity will augment our own individual system approaches by facilitating partnerships and information sharing, acknowledging that medical care is just one is just one factor among many social factors that influence an individual’s health. We welcome the opportunity to engage in the process that will be created by establishment of this Commission.

For all the foregoing reasons, I urge you to give HB78 a **FAVORABLE** report for HB78.

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