



March 5, 2021

Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
225 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street, Room Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: FAVORABLE - HB1071– Health Standards Plant-Based Meals in Prisons & Hospitals.

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committee Members:

The NAACP Prince George's Branch supports HB1071 - Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities and Health Care Facilities as one of the greatest health and wellness bills that could improve the health of vulnerable and minority communities in legislative history. As you aware, in the latest 2017 report on the causes of death for Prince George's County residents it indicates that heart disease (1,450 deaths) and cancer (1,460 deaths) are responsible for half of all deaths in the county, followed by stroke (364 deaths) and diabetes (253 deaths). Many of these leading causes of death in the county are due to chronic disease. Unmanaged chronic disease is said to have contributed largely to health care costs. Prevention, management and even reversal of chronic disease can improve the overall health and life expectancy of residents in the county.

Therefore, in 2018, during the Maryland State Conference Annual Convention, the Prince George's County delegation supported the Plant-based Based Meals for hospitals, prisons, and K-12 Resolution authored by NAACP Montgomery County Branch member, social justice advocate and Attorney Jo Saint-George. The goal of the resolution was to ensure that the Maryland and Prince George's County residents are educated and empower with information on how to improve and reverse chronic disease through access to plant-based meals and medical providers trained in Lifestyle Medicine. Not only was the Plant-Based Meal Resolution voted and approved by the Maryland State Conference as a state-wide legislative priority, in July 2019 during the National Annual Convention, the NAACP nationals approved of the resolution which is now a national priority for the NAACP 2,200 branches and over 600,000 members.

As a national priority to reduce health disparities amongst our African-American members national wide, the Prince George's County Branch strongly supports the goals of SB-678/HB-819, which is to provide inmates and patients in hospitals with the ability to improve their health through healthy plant-based food options.

The NAACP Prince George's County Branch believes that an inmate's access to health whole plant-based foods in prison is critical to the economic development and health of our county. With over 70% of the Maryland's prison population are African American, many of which come from Prince George's County, having healthy returning citizens improves the overall health of the community.

Therefore, the Prince George's County Branch respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1071 with amendments proposed by the HBCU College of Plant-Based Lifestyle Medicine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Ross". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Robert Ross
President