



**2021 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 78 - Public Health – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan–Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021)

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support with Amendment

BILL ANALYSIS: HB 78 would create a state Commission on Health Equity charged with using a health equity framework to study the social determinants of health that affect Maryland residents and to make recommendations pertaining to policies of the state and local governments in order to implement a Health Equity Plan.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports House Bill 78 as a laudable method to address health inequity among Marylanders, a serious problem that touches the foundations of public health practice. According to the National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO):

Inequality in the United States is at the highest level since before the Great Depression and the United States has the worst health in the industrialized world. The social etiology of disease suggests that patterns of inequity in the distribution of disease and illness correspond to patterns of political, social, and economic inequality. For example, rates of disease and illness for people underpaid and forced into poverty are worsening across almost all categories and geographic areas in the United States, disproportionately affecting immigrants, people of color and women.¹² (Citations omitted).

NACCHO “encourages local health departments to act directly, with allies, on structures of inequality and violence associated with class, race, gender, and sexual orientation, as they are bound with imbalances in political power.”¹¹ As such, MACHO respectfully requests the bill be amended to include a representative from MACHO as a member of the Commission. Local health departments in Maryland are similarly focused on health equity in their work and can share lessons learned and local perspective that would be valuable to the Commission.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of Support with Amendment. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-437-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

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¹ National Association of County & City Health Officials. “Statement of Policy: Health Equity and Social Justice.” (2018, July). Retrieved January 18, 2021, from <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/05-02-Health-equity-social-just>