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MAYOR

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HB 1148

March 2, 2021

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: HOUSE BILL 1148 – SECRETARY OF HEALTH – SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS – GUIDELINES AND ADMINISTRATION OF GRANTS

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1148.

HB 1148 will transfer the administration of the school-based health center (SBHC) program from the Maryland State Department of Education to the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health under the Maryland State Department of Health.

Baltimore City is one of just 13 jurisdictions with SBHCs, and there are just eight SBHCs throughout the City. Yet, Baltimore City provides health services to more than 84,000 students in more than 200 schools. School-Based Health Centers are the more comprehensive alternative to traditional health suites. These entities are primary care health centers offering preventive, primary, chronic, and mental health care services to students who have a broad range of medical needs.

SBHCs are designed to assure that all students who are enrolled in the school have access to convenient, comprehensive health services in a caring, non-judgmental environment at a health center located in their school building. SBHCs are designed to overcome barriers to health care such as concerns over confidentiality, lack of transportation, inconvenient appointment times, cost, parental loss of time from work, lack of insurance coverage, and general apprehension about discussing health issues.

Given the considerable focus on primary care services within SBHCs, these facilities should be overseen by an entity with a focus on healthcare delivery. Therefore, the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health, housed within the Maryland Department of Health, is most logical overseer of the SBHC program. This will also ensure that said program's mission is aligned with the State's broader public health initiatives for children.

For the above reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 1148.