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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 172 Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

Budget and Tax Committee Finance Committee

January 27, 2021

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 172 (SB172) would establish Health Equity Resource Communities as designated by the Department of Health. This program would incentivize healthcare and other service providers with tax credits and grants, to build a presence in communities most in need. Community based nonprofit organizations including hospitals and universities, may apply on behalf of their service areas to receive this designation, after thorough state vetting. This program would build off of a similar pilot program from 2012-16, which created five zones throughout urban, suburban, and rural Maryland. This program would be funded by a temporary two-year increase of 1 percent in the State alcohol sales tax.

Written Comments: The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted healthcare disparities like never before. It is no coincidence that certain communities have been disproportionately ravaged by the Coronavirus. This is the result of generations of systemic neglect and lack of adequate healthcare. Maryland has some of the greatest, and most advanced healthcare in the world, yet too many Marylanders are excluded from accessing it because of their address. SB 172 offers us an opportunity to begin addressing this generational and societal neglect, and build a better healthcare system for all Marylanders.

Since the start of the pandemic the 21215 zip code in Northwest Baltimore City has consistently been considered a COVID-19 hotspot. Whereas mere miles away in Baltimore County, case counts have remained stable. As a member organization of the One Park Heights initiative, we work with our partners in the area to help deconstruct disparities like these, and to bring resources into the community that do not currently exist there. Park Heights is the exact type of community that stands to significantly benefit from the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act. With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council respectfully urges a favorable report of SB172.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

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Member of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated

