

HB 1082_PCC_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Aisha Robinson

Position: FAV



primary care coalition

making
health care
happen

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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley and members, Finance Committee

FROM: Hillery Tsumba, Director, Organizational Strategy, Primary Care Coalition

DATE: March 31, 2022

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT** – HB 1082, Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements

The Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County (PCC) works with clinics, hospitals, health care providers, and other community partners to coordinate health services for our most vulnerable neighbors. The PCC administers a variety of programs that provide a continuum of health care services for low-income, uninsured, and underinsured, ethnically diverse individuals including Montgomery County's health safety-net programs—Montgomery Cares and Care for Kids—which together serve the health care needs of some 30,000 low-income individuals. The PCC supports HB 1082 and recommends its passage.

The Montgomery Cares program serves a population that speaks over 40 different languages, with over 70% speaking Spanish. While PCC is proud to deliver a program to such a diverse population, it is not without its challenges. "Some of the greatest disparities in health literacy occur among racial and ethnic minority groups from different cultural backgrounds and those who do not speak English as a first language."¹ Adding on to this challenge, uninsured individuals are also "at higher risk of having low health literacy."¹ We also know these challenges are not unique to the Montgomery Cares safety net. Passage HB1082 will help programs like Montgomery Cares address health literacy barriers by providing professional resources and tools to address our constituents' needs.

The "Health Literacy in The 50 States Report" finds states with higher literacy scores also have lower rates of diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure.² In this report Maryland scored a median health IQ of 138 and was ranked 34 (out of the 50 states) overall. Improving health literacy is a strong step toward improving people's quality of life and strengthening community safety nets. For these reasons, PCC urges the Committee to vote in favor of HB 1082.

¹ Health Literacy <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/health-literacy> accessed on March 3, 2022

² Health Literacy In The 50 States - A Report For 21st Century Health. (2019, January 31). Health IQ. <https://www.healthiq.com/blog/health-literacy-report/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillery Tumba". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Hillery" and last name "Tumba" clearly legible.

Hillery Tumba
Director, Organizational Strategy
Primary Care Coalition

HB1082_USM_FAV_FINANCE.pdf

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: FAV



SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

House Bill 1082

Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

March 31, 2022

Favorable

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our position on House Bill 1082. The bill designates the University of Maryland (UMCP) Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub.

Health literacy is now a central focus of national health objectives. Last year, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion within the US Department of Health and Human Services released [Healthy People 2030](#). This fifth iteration of the Healthy People initiative features research and leading health indicators that assess the overall health and well-being of the Nation. The overarching goal: ***“Eliminate health disparities, achieve health equity, and attain health literacy to improve the health and well-being of all.”*** Moreover, the initiative updates definitions of health literacy to include both the importance of individual skills and the role that organizations like the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy play in equitably empowering the acquisition and use of health information.

House Bill 1082, by designating UMCP as the state's Consumer Health Information Hub, opens the door to multidisciplinary teams of expert health literacy researchers, consultants, and practitioners who remain dedicated to improving individual and population health by making health information easy to understand and use.

Unquestionably, health literacy requires integrated intervention by both the governments and individuals. Moreover, university faculty, staff and students have a great role in distributing reliable information about disease prevention behaviors. Access to reliable, accurate and consistent information (presented in plain language) is key to promoting public health. House Bill 1082 establishes and promotes health literacy criteria, certifications and best practices.

Thank you for allowing the USM to express our support for House Bill 1082.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of 12 institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards 8 out of every 10 bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of 21 members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

USM Office of Government Relations - Patrick Hogan: phogan@usmd.edu

HB 1082_PJC_Support_FIN.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashley Black

Position: FAV



Ashley Black, Staff Attorney
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HB 1082
Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub & Requirements
Hearing of the Senate Finance Committee
March 31, 2022
1:00 PM

SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health Rights Project supports policies and practices that promote the overall health of Marylanders struggling to make ends meet, with the explicit goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes. **PJC strongly supports HB 1082**, which, if passed, would designate the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub. It would also require State and local agencies to use plain language in communications about health, safety and social services benefits.

PJC frequently receives calls from low-income community members not only seeking information on their rights related to healthcare, but also seeking support to help them navigate Maryland’s complex healthcare system. During the pandemic, we have received these types of calls most often from individuals who have a chronic illness, Limited English-proficiency (LEP) or those who have suddenly lost their health insurance coverage. When consumers cannot easily obtain or understand health information to make informed health decisions, they may have difficulty seeking preventative health care and managing chronic illnesses which can lead to poor health outcomes. For individuals with LEP, the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate health information can lead to poor comprehension and adherence to treatment and poor health outcomes, including undiagnosed or untreated illnesses. Maryland must not only improve access to health care for all Marylanders but must also invest in improving the health literacy of its consumers.

HB 1082 addresses these issues by shifting state and local agencies towards using plain language in important public facing health communications, such as those on public health emergencies, health care services and insurance. By designating a health information hub, HB 1082 would help eliminate barriers to attaining high health literacy and could aid the State in improving health outcomes for low-income Marylanders and those with LEP.

The Public Justice Center is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and as such does not endorse or oppose any political party or candidate for elected office.

For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **HB 1082**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 x 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.

HB 1082-PH-Consumer Health Info Hub and Requiremen

Uploaded by: Ben Steffen

Position: FAV



BILL NO: HB 1082

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

POSITION: Support as amended

TITLE: Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements (“HB1082”) would designate the University of Maryland’s Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub. HB 1082 also requires State and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, and social services benefits. The bill establishes grant requirements related to health literacy and supports development of staff training and standardized protocols for evaluating the appropriateness of health literacy initiatives. The bill provides that the provisions of this Act are not subject to judicial review and do not create a judicial or administrative right of action. The bill also requires the appropriation of \$350,000 each fiscal year beginning in 2024 to the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub. The Consumer Health Information Hub shall become effective July 2022 and shall remain effective until June 30, 2026.

POSITION AND RATIONALE

The Maryland Health Care Commission supports HB 1082 as amended.

The mission of the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) includes promoting informed health care decision making by collecting and publicly reporting meaningful information on the availability, quality, and cost of services to Maryland consumers, providers, and other stakeholders. Our statute mandates public reporting on the quality and performance of Maryland health care providers including nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, home health, hospice, ambulatory surgery facilities and health plans.

Maryland government is committed to engaging Maryland residents in their own health care. Over the past two years, the challenges of earning and holding consumers attention has proven daunting. Regardless of whether one is promoting vaccination, educating on the Total Cost of Care Model, or informing patients on the quality and cost of different providers new ideas are always welcome. State agencies use plain language standards, seek guidance with consumer advocates and obtain input from consumer focus groups to guide our work

throughout the years. Given the array of health care sources, some credible others not, getting the right information at the right time to the right resident is an enormous challenge. Our *Healthcare Quality Reports* consumer website¹ is the vehicle through which we present our quality and performance data to the public. We know firsthand the importance of rapidly evolving information presentations to reflect the latest approaches and engaging trusted community members in promoting our work.

The MHCC supports the concept of a Consumer Health Information Hub to guide and coordinate the health literacy standards and requirements across State and local government agencies and to serve as a resource for health literacy initiatives. The Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy within the University of Maryland School of Public Health appears to have the expertise and infrastructure to serve in that capacity.

For these reasons, the Commission asks for a favorable report on HB 1082 as amended.

Note: The Maryland Health Care Commission is an independent State agency, and the position of the Commission may differ from the position of the Maryland Department of Health.

¹ (<https://healthcarequality.mhcc.maryland.gov/>)



HB 1082 - Consumer Health Information Hub - LOS -

Uploaded by: Brian Sims

Position: FAV



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 31, 2022

To: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements

Dear Chair Kelley:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 1082. Health literacy is critical to our mission of a healthy Maryland. The ability of consumers to successfully understand and navigate their health care options is vital to meet the population health goals of the Total Cost of Care Model. Maryland hospitals thoroughly review patient materials so they can be understood across education levels and populations. However, we appreciate the ability to leverage the expertise contemplated by HB 1082 to further our accessibility efforts as needed.

The impact of low health literacy has been well documented. More than 80 million adults in the United States have low health literacy, which can adversely affect the quality of their health care. Limited health literacy is associated with increased hospitalizations, greater use of emergency care, and lower adherence to health improving regimens—all leading to poorer overall health and higher mortality rates.

We appreciate the bill's holistic view on different aspects of health literacy, including alignment of state and local government requirements. Mandatory patient notices and disclosures have increased considerably over the years, often with compulsory model language and provisions that can potentially compound the challenges generated by low health literacy. We believe the benefits of the Consumer Health Information Hub, proposed under HB 1082, will be magnified if it explores how to streamline patient-centered communications across state and federal requirements to improve understanding of patient rights and responsibilities.

Health literacy is essential for empowering patients to take control and manage their own health, thus contributing to the continued success of Maryland's Model. We thank the sponsor for introducing this important legislation to help Marylanders make informed health care decisions.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report on HB 1082.

For more information, please contact:
Brian Sims, Director, Quality & Health Improvement
Bsims@mhaonline.org

Senate Testimony on Health Literacy Center 3-30-22

Uploaded by: Carol Cronin

Position: FAV

State's Consumer Health Information Hub
HB 1082
SUPPORT
Written Testimony from Carol Cronin, M.S.W., M.S.G.
Senate Finance Committee
3/30/22

As a gerontologist and patient advocate working both in Maryland and nationally, I strongly support HB 1082 that would designate a state consumer health information hub to address issues of health literacy.

Promoting the use of plain language is essential to help Marylanders understand the complexities of health care—particularly in our state where the “Maryland model” of regulation and oversight is different from healthcare delivered in other states.

A prerequisite for informed decision making by patients and families is the ability to understand information to support choices and protect health. We are fortunate to have a leading center at the Univ. of Maryland Horowitz Center for Health Literacy to provide assistance. I was recently at a hospital patient/family meeting discussing the issue of implementing new state and federal billing practices – a difficult task given the complexity of the topic. My first thought and suggestion was: has the hospital team checked with the Horowitz Center for assistance?

The US healthcare system is complicated and expensive. Decisions that patients and families make about what healthcare they receive or don't receive and how and where they receive it all have significant consequences in terms of their health and their pocketbook. And outcomes are made worse by inequities due to race, ethnicity, education, age and other factors which is made clear by our COVID experience. Ensuring that patients and families understand their choices because information sponsors have communicated effectively is essential. Having a resource that is available to state and local public agencies, health systems, non-profit and community based organizations and others will help make this happen.

As a gerontologist and patient and family advocate who has worked at the federal level with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), in Maryland on the Consumer Standing Advisory Committee of the Health Services Cost Review Commission and several Maryland Health Care Commission committees and long been involved in the non-profit sector around informed health care decision making, I stand in strong support of HB 1082.

Thank you.

Carol Cronin
19 Mayo Ave.
Annapolis, MD 21403
443-994-4616 (cell)

HB 1082_Cann_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Courtney Cann

Position: FAV

March 22, 2022

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of **H.B. 1082**, a bill sponsored by Delegates Peña-Melnyk, Cullison, and Hill that designates the University of Maryland's Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub and requires state and local agencies to use plain language in their communications to the public regarding health, safety, and social service benefits. I am a current Masters of Public Health student at the University of Maryland School of Public Health and unaffiliated with the Horowitz Center. I support this bill as it has the potential to address some of the major obstacles public health professionals, communities, and governments have faced in controlling the transmission of COVID-19 in the last two years.

As stated in the bill and reiterated during the HGO committee's hearing, health literacy is a crucial component of public health, safety, and health equity. It was noted during the meeting that improvements in health literacy can advance the mission of Maryland's Total Cost of Care model by improving the likelihood individuals will adhere to medication and chronic disease management regimens. Furthermore, numerous bills have been introduced and passed relating to health disparities and equity, including one establishing the Maryland Commission on Health Equity last year, showing the state's commitment to addressing equity. H.B. 1082 has the potential to further the state's goals and initiatives of decreasing both healthcare costs and disparities by providing health information in a manner that is usable and understandable by the average person. Providing accurate, timely, and easily comprehensible information can reduce misinformation, a growing problem that has affected the way individuals understand and believe health information. H.B. 1082 empowers the people of Maryland to combat misinformation by providing public communications and documents in plain language and improving health literacy across the state.

We cannot expect people to not fall victim to misinformation if they cannot easily access and comprehend trusted information. With the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy, our state already has an excellent resource that has been working with other organizations to advance health literacy, making this an excellent opportunity to capitalize on existing resources to ensure all Marylanders are actually able to find and understand information related to health, safety, and social service benefits. No one should need a degree in biology, public health, or law to understand the health information their local and state officials share with the community, the coverage and costs included in their health insurance plan, or to complete the required documents to apply for assistance and benefits. There is little point in allocating resources to establish and support health and equity initiatives if the people the programs are designed to assist cannot find, understand, or trust the information.

We have each seen firsthand the true cost of low health literacy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic - both financially and in more devastating terms of widespread morbidity and mortality because individuals simply did not know and did not trust the ever-changing health guidance. We need a better way to communicate health and safety information to people of all health literacy

levels. As such, H.B.1082 should be seen as a step toward preparedness for the next health and safety emergency, and I urge each member to vote in favor of H.B.1082 in committee and on the House floor.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony,

Courtney Cann

Hyattsville, Maryland

MPH candidate | University of Maryland School of Public Health,
Health Policy Analysis & Evaluation

HB1082 - Consumer Health Information - CRISP Testi

Uploaded by: Craig Behm

Position: FAV



HB1082: Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements

Position: Support

Submitted By: Craig Behm, Executive Director

CRISP appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 1082. As Maryland's State-Designated Health Information Exchange (HIE), CRISP's vision is to advance health and wellness by deploying health information technology solutions adopted through cooperation and collaboration.

Fulfilling our vision requires significant communication with providers, policymakers, and patients. The inherent complexity of our industry makes it challenging to meaningfully discuss the implications of data sharing with stakeholders. To overcome this challenge, we work directly with the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy to accurately and effectively disseminate information to patients.

This bill would formally designate the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub. We believe this designation and the mission described in the bill would significantly contribute to efforts to educate patients through the promotion of health literacy. We will continue to leverage this valuable resource and are eager to see other organizations take advantage of their unique expertise.

HB1082_Baur_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Baur

Position: FAV



March 30, 2022

To: Senate Finance Committee
Re: House Bill 1082
Written testimony in support of the bill

I'm Dr. Cynthia Baur, Endowed Chair and Director of the Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy, University of Maryland School of Public Health. The Horowitz Center is part of the state's land grant higher education system with a public service mission, and the Center has served the people of Maryland since 2007.

There are three key reasons you should provide a favorable report on House Bill 1082: First, it will improve the ability of our health professionals and government agencies to communicate effectively with the public and for the public to understand those communications. Both public health and healthcare professionals get a lot of scientific and clinical training but little to no communication training, even though communicating health and medical information to the public and patients is a large part of their jobs, as the pandemic has demonstrated.

One source of data on Maryland providers' communication skills is the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Hospital Compare website. It reports patient ratings of how well their doctors and nurses communicate, if medicines were clearly explained, and if they understood what to do when they got home. At one Maryland hospital, for example, only 67% of the responding patients said their nurses communicated well in comparison to a national average of 80%, and 71% of doctors communicated well compared to 81% nationally. Data for other Maryland hospitals is available at <https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/>

Second, as a result of improved communication, individuals and communities will be better informed and prepared to act on health recommendations and use health services. Examples include giving patients plain language medication instructions so they understand why the medicines matter and how to take them as prescribed; explaining clearly how and why diabetes and other prevention programs can help them feel better in the present and save them years of poor health and expensive treatments; knowing when the emergency department, urgent care or primary care is the best option; and breaking down complex health insurance information. Each of these situations has personal and system level costs, and the health literacy improvements HB 1082 creates can be achieved without adding more hospital beds or paying for more expensive medical care; indeed, if we use health literacy to cultivate a culture of prevention and an informed public, the long-term result should be a patient-centered system and diminished health care costs in line with the Total Cost of Care goals.

The third reason is HB 1082 advances Maryland's health equity goals by giving everyone, no matter their education level or literacy and numeracy skills, access to plain

language information. It's a "universal precautions" approach to communication when we use plain language with everyone. We don't judge someone as being low literacy; instead, we make clear and useful information available and accessible to all.

The reality is the gap between the public's literacy, numeracy, and science skills and what and how health professionals communicate is huge. In Maryland, only one-third of our eighth graders have proficient reading, math and science skills, according to the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress. Our eighth graders, most of whom don't have proficient skills, become teen-agers and young adults not only making health decisions for themselves but also for others as they form families and provide care for parents and other relatives and friends.

But a lot of health and safety information requires strong skills in all these areas to understand the significance of the health risks and how to avoid them. This means the majority of our teens and young adults enter a critical life stage with a weak foundation to evaluate health risks related to tobacco, marijuana and alcohol use, distracted driving, and sexually transmitted infections, to name a few. Young adults with chronic conditions who age out of pediatrics face daunting conditions as they take over their own medical and self care. For example, a young adult with diabetes juggles medicines, healthcare visits, insurance coverage and paperwork, diet, exercise, and stress management, all while trying to launch into early adulthood. Dense, jargon-filled patient education materials and unintelligible healthcare forms are the last thing young people want.

The Horowitz Center is uniquely positioned to help Maryland organizations build their clear communication capacity. The Center is a one-of-a-kind public health resource not only in Maryland but also the U.S. We have helped the Maryland Department of Health implement the state's diabetes action plan and provide communication training to healthcare providers. We work with local health departments on community outreach and engagement. We are currently working with Baltimore City and Frederick, Washington, Charles, Cecil and the Midshore counties on COVID-19 communications. Our expertise is in creating easy-to-understand and use health materials and helping organizations identify and remove health literacy barriers so people get the information and services they need. We align with the "Maryland Model" of healthcare that aims to control costs and improve quality and equity.

We are a small Center with only one state-funded position for the Director. A founding gift 15 years ago provides modest resources for student stipends and small projects. Yet, Maryland has a great demand for health literacy services. The COVID-19 pandemic shows what happens when people don't know about or trust information for their health decisions. Maryland's diabetes action plan with its ambitious goals to prevent and manage diabetes requires health literacy improvements. HB 1082 will position Maryland to have a health literacy infrastructure with a workforce and agencies ready to communicate with a diverse public.

HB1082 provides a 3-year trial period with modest funding for the Center to add subject matter expertise and grow its work with state and local organizations to address the

increasing demand for health literacy services. The bill provides a menu of options, and we will work with organizations on the highest priority activities. We will report annually to the General Assembly so that you can track health literacy progress in the state.

Before I came to UMD in 2017, I led national health literacy initiatives at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I know investments in health literacy pay off by improving individual and community health. My testimony provides evidence of the benefits.

Maryland has the chance to be the national leader in showing how a statewide approach to advancing health literacy benefits its residents and meets its healthcare goals. I urge a favorable report on House Bill 1082.

HB 1082 - Support - Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Deborah Rivkin

Position: FAV

Deborah Rivkin
Vice President
Government Affairs – Maryland

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House Bill 1082 – Consumer Health Information Hub and Requirements

Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of House Bill 1082. This bill designates The University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the state's consumer health information hub and sets forth required programs and funding sources for the hub. The purpose of the hub is to promote and ensure public access to accurate, consistent, evidence-based, plain-language information in preferred languages to inform decisions about health, safety, and social services benefits.

At CareFirst, we believe that all people have the right to access high-quality, person-centered affordable healthcare. Suitable access to care is inclusive of one's ability to obtain and process health information and make informed decisions pertaining to one's treatment and overall health. Health literacy is a critical tool for patients to understand basic health information and services because it enhances the skills needed to understand and make good decisions about one's health. Research shows that individuals with low health literacy are significantly more likely than individuals with adequate health literacy to delay or forgo needed care or to report difficulty finding a provider. Health literacy skills allow patients to take control of their own well-being by making smart healthcare choices, improving communication with providers, and equipping them with information to advocate for themselves in a medical setting.

Patient experience during the pandemic has demonstrated how low levels of health literacy—due to systemic inequities and inadequate access to healthcare information tailored to a consumer's level of health literacy—exacerbate health inequities experienced by people from minority and disadvantaged communities. Marylanders have varying levels of education or literacy and may prefer to speak in a language other than English. **We all need health literacy skills and access to adequate resources to successfully find and access care, prevent and manage health conditions, understand our choices, and make informed decisions. We all deserve a health system that affords the opportunity to take ownership of our health.** HB 1082 recognizes that access to information that is culturally and linguistically appropriate is a health equity issue and promotes effective communication to improve health outcomes for all Marylanders.

We urge a favorable report.

About CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

In its 84th year of service, CareFirst, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a not-for-profit healthcare company which, through its affiliates and subsidiaries, offers a comprehensive portfolio of health insurance products and administrative services to 3.5 million individuals and employers in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. In 2020, CareFirst invested \$27.8 million to improve overall health, and increase the accessibility, affordability, safety, and quality of healthcare throughout its market areas. To learn more about CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, visit our website at www.carefirst.com and our transforming healthcare page at www.carefirst.com/transformation, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#).

HB1082_Legal Action Center_Support Senate Finance

Uploaded by: Ellen Weber

Position: FAV

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Senate Finance Committee Hearing
Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements – HB 1082
March 31, 2022
FAVORABLE

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements (HB 1082). This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Legal Action Center, a law and policy organization that fights discrimination, builds health equity and restores opportunities for individuals with substance use disorders, arrest and conviction records, and HIV or AIDS. In Maryland, the Legal Action Center convenes the Maryland Parity Coalition and works with its partners to ensure non-discriminatory access to mental health and substance use disorder services through enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 and other initiatives.

Health literacy is essential for all individuals and families to ensure physical and mental health wellness, make informed decisions about prevention and treatment, participate actively in all health care planning and decisions, understand health insurance coverage of and access to benefits and services, and take advantage of remedies to address denials of medically necessary health services. HB 1082 would help improve health literacy among Marylanders by establishing and promoting the use of plain language and health literacy criteria, certifications, and best practices for state and local public agencies, health systems and other entities. It would also strive to address through improved health literacy the inequities in our health systems that have had a long and enduring devastating effect on the health and well-being of Black, Brown and other people of color.

For individuals with substance use disorder and mental health conditions, the development of equity-focused, non-stigmatizing and accurate health information products, education programs and materials, and public media messages could not be more important. The public is continually bombarded with stigmatizing, inappropriate and inaccurate portrayals of individuals with substance use and mental health conditions. These practices deter individuals from seeking treatment. Additionally, many have limited knowledge about the value and efficacy of behavioral health treatment. Far too many individuals with substance use disorders do not seek or access care because mainstream health systems themselves do not convey their understanding of or ability to deliver non-judgmental and effective interventions and treatment referrals. Those who seek behavioral health care do not know how to access services, understand the complex health care delivery system, understand their insurance coverage of such benefits, know how to navigate their health plans, or understand that they can challenge inappropriate denials of care.

The establishment of a Consumer Health Information Hub would help address these barriers to treatment and sustained recovery. It could assist state agencies, such as the Department of Health, the Maryland Insurance Administration and the Maryland Health Care Commission develop materials that support individuals and families who need accurate, informative and objective information about health care services for mental health and substance use disorders and insurance coverage of and access to such services. The hub could also lend assistance to non-governmental organizations that conduct outreach to and education for persons with behavioral health conditions about health services and insurance coverage, linkages to services, benefit navigation and resolution of care denials. Health literacy is a critical foundation to address and begin to reverse the devastating loss of life from untreated substance use disorders and mental illness.

Thank you for considering our view. We urge a favorable report on HB 1082,

Ellen M. Weber, J.D.
Sr. Vice President for Health Initiatives
Legal Action Center
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HFAM Testimony HB 1082_Finance.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph DeMattos

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

House Bill 1082: Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

March 31, 2022

Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 1082. HFAM represents over 170 skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as nearly 80 associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our skilled nursing members provide the majority of long-term and post-acute care to Marylanders in need.

House Bill 1082 designates the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub, requires State and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, and social services benefits, and establishes grant and procurement requirements related to health literacy.

As we have all seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that Marylanders have access to clear, accurate, and evidence-based information and services to make informed healthcare decisions. Given the wide range of diverse residents throughout the State, it is important that health information is provided in a way that is linguistically and culturally appropriate. Not only is this beneficial for individual and family health, but it can help combat issues of health disparities by creating more equitable access to healthcare information.

There are many agencies and organizations throughout the State that provide credible, accurate, and consistent health information. It is important that Marylanders be able to access this information with confidence. Understanding health plans, discharge instructions, prescriptions, and social services can be difficult for people of all backgrounds and education levels.

Together, we should ensure that all Marylanders have access to critical healthcare information by supporting State and local agencies and organizations that communicate with the public during times of crisis and about high-priority issue areas such as opioid abuse prevention and diabetes prevention.

Given Maryland's Total Cost of Care contract and our population health initiatives, it is universally beneficial for all stakeholders that consumers are well-informed with accessible, consistent, and evidence-based healthcare information.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 1082.

Submitted by:

Joseph DeMattos, Jr.

President and CEO

(410) 290-5132

Dr Joseph Wright HB 1082 testimony 3-31-22.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph Wright

Position: FAV



Testimony of

**Joseph L. Wright, MD, MPH
Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer
University of Maryland Medical System**

**Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy & Management
University of Maryland Schools of Medicine and Public Health**

**Maryland General Assembly, Senate Finance Committee – HB 1082
Thursday, March 31st, 2022**

Dear Honorable Chair Kelley,

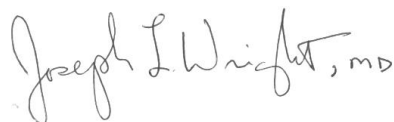
I am Dr. Joseph Wright, Vice-President and Chief Health Equity Officer at the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS). I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 1082 primarily because it is good public policy for health information and services to be understandable and accessible by all Marylanders. Healthy People 2030, the nation's health agenda, has the overarching goal to eliminate health disparities, achieve health equity, and attain health literacy to improve the health and well-being of all. In addition, the bill advances two major elements of Maryland's health care agenda. First, because health literacy is so closely tied to inequities in health care, the bill advances our health equity goals. Second, increasing personal and community health literacy is essential if we are to succeed with Maryland's Total Cost of Care Model. My professional charge at UMMS is to identify and eliminate disparities and advance equity in care. As noted in a recently authored Baltimore Sun commentary, our healthcare systems have received major wake-up calls about barriers that create structural inequities. Health literacy issues are part of that wake-up call. When health systems don't communicate clearly with the people they serve, we create communication and information barriers.

UMMS hospitals serve diverse patient populations, and every day, we see the consequences when we don't communicate clearly and patients and their caregivers don't understand their health conditions. For example, we see people returning to our emergency departments because they didn't understand the discharge instructions. We also see benefits when communication among providers and consumers is clear and consistent because care transitions from hospital to home can happen smoothly. HB 1082 provides many remedies for communication inequities. It provides health literacy expertise to organizations throughout the state, so they have a prepared workforce, plain language health materials, and transparent criteria to guide public communication. We are fortunate that Maryland has a unique entity to serve as an information hub - - the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy. They have the expertise that will help health systems try demonstration projects and measure outcomes that spur innovation in patient-centered approaches and target population health goals. The bill provides for an annual report to the legislature so that the State can monitor and discuss how to make additional progress.

Maryland has ambitious goals with the Total Cost of Care model that can only be achieved if our patients have accurate and accessible information. But, even if we succeed on the technical measures, but don't attend to the equity issues like health literacy, we won't have the patient-centered health system we aspire to and that Marylanders deserve.

HB 1082 sets us on the right path and I urge your support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph L. Wright, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "MD" at the end.

Joseph L. Wright, MD, MPH
Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer
University of Maryland Medical System
Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy & Management
University of Maryland Schools of Medicine and Public Health

Letter to Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk.pdf

Uploaded by: Kelly Cantor

Position: FAV

Cesar R. Sabates, D.D.S.
President

March 4, 2022

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Maryland General Assembly
Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen St., Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Peña-Melnyk:

As the President of the American Dental Association's 161,000 members, I am writing to thank you for introducing HB 1082 and to share some thoughts on the importance of Health Literacy in the oral healthcare arena.

The ADA National Advisory Committee on Health Literacy in Dentistry (NACHLD) is committed to addressing health literacy in order to improve patient understanding of treatment modalities, increase their confidence as healthcare consumers and improve patient outcomes. As dentists, we believe oral health literacy is the foundation of a lifetime of wellness, and that most oral health ailments can be avoided by increasing oral health literacy among all populations. Additionally, oral health literacy must be a cornerstone of improving the utilization of care by underserved populations.

It is my pleasure to write in support of the **Maryland House Bill 1082: Consumer Health Information Hub and Requirements** that would designate The University of Maryland (UMD) Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy (Center) as the state's consumer health information hub. The Center's mission is to advance health literacy in Maryland and the nation, and this bill will provide state and local government agencies, health systems, nonprofit and community-based organizations and other entities with health literacy expertise and resources. With this legislation Maryland will, once again, set a national standard – by removing health literacy barriers and advancing health justice. The Center has had significant relevance in addressing health literacy at the individual, community and societal levels. Its research provides insights not only for Maryland residents, but has national impact as well.

House Bill 1082 would provide the Center an appropriation of \$350,000 per year for three years, and its programs will establish and promote the use of plain language and health literacy criteria, provide certifications and best practices for a variety of organizations; identify health literacy barriers and help organizations address these and monitor progress and report annually to the Maryland General Assembly. In addition to its work in Maryland, the Center has contributed greatly to oral health literacy nationally.

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
March 4, 2022
Page 2

The ADA provides detailed information about health literacy in dentistry at www.ada.org/resources/community-initiatives/health-literacy-in-dentistry. Should you have additional questions, please contact Kelly Cantor at cantork@ada.org.

Again, thank you for your commitment to enhancing healthy literacy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cesar R. Sabates, D.D.S.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cesar R. Sabates, D.D.S.
President

cc: Dr. George R. Shepley, ADA president-elect
Dr. Frank J. Graham, ADA trustee, Fourth District
Dr. Raymond A. Cohlma, ADA executive director
Dr. Gregory Buckler, executive director, Maryland State Dental Association

Maryland Matters Article_Health Literacy-HB1082,Pr

Uploaded by: Leni Preston

Position: FAV

Leni Preston
Independent Consumer Voice on Health Policy
6306 Swords Way, Bethesda, MD 20817
Email: lenipreston@verizon.net; Cell: 301.351.9381

Maryland Matters Commentary
Health Literacy: This is Personal
6 March 2022

COVID 19 has taught us many lessons. Addressing them will take both expertise and time. However, I am excited that one key issue can be addressed right now in the Maryland General Assembly. That is the need for consumers to have timely and accurate information as part of a well-coordinated communication strategy. How? By passing House Bill 1082, sponsored by Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk (D-21). This legislation would establish a Consumer Health Information Hub at the University of Maryland Horowitz Center for Health Literacy.

When you read or hear the term “health literacy,” do your eyes glaze over? In my experience, most people's do. So you may ask yourself, why is this legislation important. I doubt your answer would be that health literacy is actually critical to Maryland’s success with its current effort to transform our health care system. Or that there is a vital intersection between health literacy and health equity, the urgent need for which was exposed the pandemic. Yet those are valid policy arguments, and for more than a decade I have advocated for these as essential for a patient-centered health system.

Today, though, I have a far more personal reason for supporting HB1082 with its promise of raising health literacy levels for consumers across the state. That's because, for the last ten months, I have been immersed in the health care system as a cancer patient. Viewing health literacy through this new lens, it is clear to me that we simply must provide every single Marylander with the information and resources they need to make the best decisions for the health and well-being of themselves and their family.

Here are a few things I have learned from my personal experience. First, it is abundantly clear that my ability to "work" the system successfully was based on more than my excellent insurance coverage or the fact that my state ranks 5th in the nation for health care. Rather it was my social and educational advantages, as well as my past health policy work, that brought me to a slightly elevated health literacy level.

Yet even those assets did not shield me from the barriers and challenges that are built into our system. Just a few of these were: (1) identifying, coordinating and communicating with multiple medical specialists; (2) determining which doctor had privileges at what hospital and what difference

could that make; (3) addressing technological challenges in accessing and updating my health records; (4) interpreting and evaluating lab reports and diagnoses; and (4) evaluating medications and treatments while faced with often conflicting recommendations from different specialists

At every step along the way I found myself asking - what if I lived in:

- A poor urban neighborhood - who would help me navigate the system?
- A rural area - would I have internet access to sign into my patient portal or Electronic Health Record (and even if I did, would I know how to use that)?
- An immigrant community - could I find a doctor who understood my culture and language?

And, what if I had the same experience as Delegate Pena-Melnyk? As an eight year old, and a new emigrant, she had to translate the doctor's "confusing jargon" for her mother. What a difference it would have made if the information they received was in Spanish and plain language?

That is what health literacy is all about. The Delegate's legislation will create the opportunity to set standards and establish best practices for medical professionals, our hospitals, and the many health organizations that work in communities across the state to provide each of us with all of the tools we need to make wise decisions. It does this in a cost-effective manner that leverages the Horowitz Center's exceptional resources. Our state has been a national leader in implementation of the Affordable Care Act and in the transformation of our health care delivery system. The establishment of the Consumer Health Information Hub would be one more example of Maryland's exemplary leadership.

It is past the time to ensure that individuals no longer bear the weight of learning a language I will call "medicalese." And, it is certainly way past the time to end a situation in which only the most privileged have the resources to find their way through the confusing maze of our current health care system.

Let's get this done. The General Assembly should pass HB1082 and send it to Governor Hogan for his signature.

Written Testimony HB1082.pdf

Uploaded by: Maria Teresa Canto

Position: FAV

My written testimony supports House Bill 1082: Consumer Health Information Hub and Requirements.

My name is María Teresa Canto. I am a licensed dentist in the State of Maryland and a Diplomatic of the American Board of Dental Public Health. I reside in Montgomery County (6 Manor Spring Ct, Silver Spring, MD 20906).

The mission of the University of Maryland (UMD) Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy (Center) is to advance health literacy in Maryland and the nation. This bill supports providing state and local governments agencies, health systems, nonprofit and community-based organization with health literacy expertise and resources. With this legislation Maryland will set a national standard by removing health literacy barriers and advancing health justice.

In my work related experience addressing health literacy is crucial to reduce health inequalities in the US. Activities of the Center include establishing and promoting the use of plain language and identification of health literacy barriers to improve the provision of health services for underserved populations. In addition, the Center will monitor and report annually to the Maryland General Assembly on the findings of what works for different populations/communities and how it impacts health literacy related activities.

As an oral health provider, it is crucial to promote effective communications with patients so they can follow their treatment plan to improve health outcomes and reduce health costs. In a larger scale, it is critical that the health care professional and government agencies communicate effectively with the public, patient, and caregivers. The importance of clear communication has been highlighted in the last two years during the COVID-19 epidemic. Lack of clear targeted messages created a lot of confusion among providers and the public.

As an oral health provider HB 1082 will directly impact my work because it will provide: 1) professional resources and tools to address the specific needs of patients, and 2) training and professional development opportunities to better communicate with patients and other health services providers.

My vision and the Center's vision align because improved health outcomes and health justice are dependent of a world where everyone has understandable, useful information and services to make informed decision about their health.

HB 1082 - FIN - CHRC Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Luckner

Position: FAV



STATE OF MARYLAND

Community Health Resources Commission

45 Calvert Street, Room 336 • Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Edward J. Kasemeyer, Chair – Mark Luckner, Executive Director

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 1082 - Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements

Dear Chair Kelley:

The Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) is pleased to submit this Letter of Support for House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements (HB 1082). As you know, the bill would accelerate efforts to promote health literacy in our state.

The CHRC was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 2005 to expand access to health services in underserved communities in our state. The CHRC has awarded 648 grants totaling \$111.9 million, supporting projects in all 24 jurisdictions of the state. These programs have collectively served more than 517,000 Marylanders, most of whom are impacted by complex health and social service conditions and face barriers in accessing health care in their communities. Health literacy is a key factor that impacts the ability of individuals to access health care services and it is especially important when developing programs that will improve access in underserved communities.

The CHRC has experience working with the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy at the University of Maryland School of Public Health. The Horowitz Center is providing technical assistance to the CHRC and its grantees, including Local Health Improvement Coalitions, as they implement CHRC-funded projects to address diabetes in their communities. Our experience working with the Horowitz Center has been favorable, and the CHRC looks forward to receiving future additional assistance contemplated under HB 1082.

Advancing health literacy is an important tool to help address the barriers that underserved communities face in accessing health care. Greater health literacy will ultimately support the state's overall policy goals of expanding health care access, reducing health disparities, improving health outcomes, and reducing avoidable hospital utilization.

For these reasons, the CHRC respectfully requests favorable report on HB 1082. We are happy to answer any questions about our support of HB 1082 or the CHRC's experience working with the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Luckner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Luckner
CHRC Executive Director

cc: The Hon. Ed Kasemeyer, CHRC Chair
The Hon. Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Members, Senate Finance Committee
Heather Shek, Director, MDH Office of Governmental Affairs

11a - X - HB 1082 - FIN - MHBE - LOS.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Maryland State of

Position: FAV

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: Letter of Support – HB 1082 – Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) respectfully submits this letter of support on House Bill (HB) 1082 – Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements. HB 1082 would designate the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy at the University of Maryland as the state’s Consumer Health Information Hub and allocate \$350,000 of state funding annually for the Hub.

In 2019, MHBE worked with the General Assembly and Governor to enact House Bill 1421, which amended MHBE’s statute to authorize the Exchange to “conduct outreach and education activities to increase health literacy” (Md. Ins. Code §31-108(b)(21)). Health literacy is a key part of ensuring that individuals can take full advantage of their health benefits, and MHBE would look forward to working with the Consumer Health Information Hub on this issue.

Uncertainty over benefits, cost-sharing and pre-deductible coverage can lead patients to avoid necessary and preventive care.¹ More than half of adults in the U.S. report having low confidence in using their insurance to access health care and most adults have inadequate knowledge of their annual out-of-pocket costs and plan deductible amounts.² There are also health insurance literacy disparities by race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and insurance status.³ Increasing the

¹ Yagi, Brian, et al., Association of Health Insurance Literacy with Health Care Utilization: a Systematic Review, Journal of General Internal Medicine, May 2021 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-021-06819-0>.

² Edward, Jean, et al., Significant Disparities Exist in Consumer Health Insurance Literacy: Implications for Health Care Reform, Health Literacy Research and Practice Volume 3, Issue 4, November 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6831506/>.

³ Villagra, Victor, et al., Health Insurance Literacy: Disparities by Race, Ethnicity, and Language Preference, American Journal of Managed Care Volume 25, Issue 3, March 2019, <https://www.ajmc.com/view/health-insurance-literacy-disparities-by-race-ethnicity-and-language-preference> ; Edward, Jean, et al., Significant Disparities Exist in Consumer Health Insurance Literacy: Implications for Health Care Reform, Health Literacy Research and Practice Volume 3, Issue 4, November 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6831506/>.



750 E. Pratt St., 6th floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
marylandhbe.com

state's investment in health literacy will help improve health equity in addition to health care access.

For further discussions or questions on HB 1082, please contact Johanna Fabian-Marks, Director of Policy and Plan Management at johanna.fabian-marks@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Eberle".

Michele Eberle
Executive Director

LWVMD- HB 1082- Consumer Health Information- Hub a

Uploaded by: Nora Miller Smith

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

HB 1082: Public Health- Consumer Health Information- Hub and Requirements

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: March 31, 2022

The League of Women Voters supports **House Bill 1082: Consumer Health Information Hub and Requirements**, which would improve health literacy and thus strengthen public health and health equity.

The pandemic has clearly shown that **access to accurate, effective health information can be life-saving.**

But health information needs to be presented in a clear, understandable, and culturally-sensitive way in order to be effective. It should be written in plain language- whether it's discharge instructions after a procedure, instructions on how to follow a diabetic diet, or what to watch for when taking a new medication. It is a patient right to make choices about treatment, and it is a responsibility of the health care provider to supply the information needed to make those choices. Effective communication is essential. Misunderstanding health information can be dangerous, and can lead to poor health outcomes.

The League of Women Voters has long been an advocate for patient rights. In the 1990's The League of Women Voters developed a comprehensive position supporting a healthcare system that provides access to affordable, quality healthcare for all U.S. residents, and which **includes health promotion and education and the protection of patients' rights.**

Having access to understandable health information is a matter of patient rights, and is especially important for those who are not comfortable with the healthcare system, or have had bad experiences with it.

A goal under Maryland's Total Cost of Care Model is to improve population health and reduce health care disparities. The Consumer Health Information Hub, as established by House Bill 1082, will provide tools and resources healthcare providers and

government agencies need to communicate effectively with patients and the public, thus improving public health and health outcomes.

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to House Bill 1082.

HB1082 - Senate_FAV_MedChi_PH - Consumer Health In

Uploaded by: Pam Kasemeyer

Position: FAV

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0872
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone

DATE: March 31, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1082 – *Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 1082.

House Bill 1082 recognizes the importance of health literacy and proposes to designate the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub. The University of Maryland School of Public Health is unique among public health schools in having a dedicated center to promote health literacy. The purpose of the Hub is to promote and ensure public access to accurate, consistent, evidence-based, multi-lingual plain language information and to assist all Marylanders in making informed decisions about health, safety, and social services benefits. The Hub will facilitate the consistent use of plain language and health literacy frameworks by state and local government agencies.

Enhancing health literacy for all Marylanders will strengthen the State's public health and health systems infrastructure. It will also serve to advance the objective of addressing health equity, especially in medically underserved and economically challenged communities, by enhancing the ability of individuals in those communities to navigate the health care, public safety, and social services systems. MedChi urges a favorable report.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone
410-244-7000

OAG HEAU_FAV_HB1082.pdf

Uploaded by: Patricia O'Connor

Position: FAV

BRIAN E. FROSH
Attorney General

ELIZABETH F. HARRIS
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General

Writer's Direct Email:
poconnor@oag.state.md.us



STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

WILLIAM D. GRUHN
Chief
Consumer Protection Division

Writer's Direct Fax No.
(410) 576-6571

Writer's Direct Dial No.
(410) 576-6515

March 30, 2022

To: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee

From: The Office of the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: House Bill 1082 (Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and
Requirements): Support

The Office of the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) supports House Bill 1082. The programs established and supported by the bill would promote the use of plain language and health literacy best practices by state and local agencies; Maryland's hospitals and health systems; and non-profit and community-based organizations. The HEAU works every day with consumers who cannot understand their health insurance coverage or hospital bills, and countless other health related issues, without assistance. We support the bill's goals of promoting effective communication to improve health outcomes and lower costs for individuals, communities and the health care system.

We ask the committee to give the bill a favorable report.

cc: Delegate Pena-Melnyk, Sponsor

DOCS-#226003-v1-HB_1082_House_Support_2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Philemon Kendzierski

Position: FAV



15 School Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-269-1554

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony
for the Senate Finance Committee
In **Support** of

House Bill 1082 – Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements Financial Institutions – Presumption of Property Abandonment – Revisions

Dear Chairman Kelley,

The League of Life and Health Insurers of Maryland, Inc. supports House Bill 1082 – Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements and urges the committee to give the bill a favorable report.

Research clearly shows that health and benefits information plays an important role in the health status of individuals and that those with poor health literacy who cannot easily access, understand, and act upon such information are more likely to experience poor health and incur significantly higher health care costs, less likely to be engaged in their care, and have a harder time managing their chronic diseases.¹ Increasingly, stakeholders across the health care system have recognized the important linkage between health literacy and health status, and are working to find solutions to this important issue.

Achieving the goals outlined in this legislation will require a system-wide commitment that involves all healthcare stakeholders communicating with consumers. Insurers remain committed to increasing health literacy in Maryland and will continue to be at the table as these discussions continue. We would like to thank Delegate Pena-Melnik for introducing this important legislation.

For these reasons, the League urges the committee to give House Bill 1082 a favorable report.

¹ Peterson PN, Shetterly SM, Clarke CL, Bekelman DB, Chan PS, Allen LA, Matlock DD, Magid DJ, Masoudi FA. Health Literacy and Outcomes Among Patients With Heart Failure, JAMA.2011;305(16):1695-1701. doi: 10.1001/JAMA.2011;512

HB1082.Finance.DD Council.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Finance Committee

March 31, 2022

HB 1082: Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is a statewide public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. As such, **we support initiatives, laws, policies, and practices that ensure greater access and equity for people with disabilities.** HB 1082 does just that.

WHY is this legislation important to people with disabilities and their families?

- **Plain language benefits everyone.** Plain language increases the likelihood that people fully understand critical information. If state and local governments use plain language in communications about health, safety, and social services benefits, more people will be better informed, effective decision-makers about their own health, safety, and services.
- **Plain language makes it easier for the public to read, understand, and use government communications.** The federal government recognizes the importance of plain language in public communications and enacted the Plain Writing Act of 2010 that requires that federal agencies use clear government communication that the public can understand and use.
- **Making information accessible to everyone is a fundamental practice of inclusion.** One of our Council members with an intellectual disability referred to this as "belonging." When she is in a meeting where people use words she doesn't understand, she feels like there isn't an effort to include her. She feels like she doesn't belong and her reaction is, "Why should I be here?"

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that Marylanders need and want information and guidance in plain language. In fact, to address that need, the Council immediately began translating and sharing critical information in plain language. Most recently, we partnered with the Maryland Department of Health to create 7 fact sheets about COVID-19 in plain language. (md-council.org/covid-19). They were also translated in 8 different languages. Thousands of Marylanders have accessed the fact sheets since they were released in December. **This clearly demonstrates the need and desire for more accessible information.**

HB 1082 will result in a larger, more diverse group of Marylanders with access and opportunity to get the information they need in the way they need it. It also clearly aligns with one of our objectives in our 5-year State Plan: to increase the availability of information, resources, and training to people with developmental disabilities and their families in underserved communities. For these reasons, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council supports HB 1082.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director: RLondon@md-council.org

2021 MOTA HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ♦ motamembers.org

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The legislation recognizes that the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy is the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub.

MOTA supports this effort because of our work on ensuring families can utilize insurance coverage for habilitative services for their children. We participated on workgroup with the Maryland Insurance Administration in identifying barriers for families in securing enough coverage to ensure their children’s needs were addressed. While many families have insurance coverage for habilitative services, they often did not know about the coverage or how to utilize the coverage, especially since many families need to go out-of-network for services. As a result of the workgroup, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation requiring the Maryland Insurance Administration to produce the “Parents’ Guide to Habilitative Services.” We believe this guide has been successful in supporting families, but we think its success could be enhanced by experts in health literacy. Therefore, we support this legislation.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or (443) 350-1325.

2022 ACNM HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Affiliate of American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The bill designates the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub. The bill also provides for a \$350,000 annual State appropriation.

Consumers need access to understandable information to support their decision-making on health decisions, including purchasing insurance and making treatment choices. This bill boosts resources to promote health literacy by harnessing the expertise of the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center. State and local agencies will be able to consult with the Center on producing their own materials, ranging from program eligibility applications to identifying provider resources within their communities.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

2022 LCPCM HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health -Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The bill would establish a state-designated Consumer Information Hub at the University of Maryland and provide \$350,000 in annual state funding.

LCPCM supports this bill because consumers often delay or forgo behavioral health services because of difficulty in navigating Maryland’s behavioral health system. Consumer-friendly information about insurance coverage, particularly for out-of-network benefits, would support consumers, as well as the providers trying to assist them. The bill would create a one-stop-shop for any State agency, local agency, or Maryland organization seeking support for creating consumer-friendly educational materials.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net.

2022 MCHS HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Maryland Community Health System

Committee:	Senate Finance Committee
Bill Number:	House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements
Hearing Date:	March 31, 2022
Position:	Support

Maryland Community Health System supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The legislation recognizes the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub and provides an annual appropriation of \$350,000.

With a designated Health Information Hub, state and local resources will provide for permanent support of efforts to improve the accessibility of consumer information on health care systems. As a network of federally qualified health centers, we support our patients in navigating insurance issues, following treatment protocols, and connecting to speciality care, including behavioral health services.

Maryland has one of the best health care systems, as our payment policies are aligned to promote positive health outcomes rather than higher volume of services. However, these systems add layers of complexity to consumers in understanding how health care practitioners, health insurers, and public health agencies are linked. If we want to transform our system to be truly patient-centered, we need to ensure our communications are accessible and understandable to the consumer. With this legislation, state and local agencies will be able to turn to the Consumer Health Information Hub for support in designing materials ranging from program eligibility applications to health education materials about chronic disease management.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can be helpful in any way, please let us know by contacting Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

2022 MDAC HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



10015 Old Columbia Road, Suite B-215
Columbia, Maryland 21046
www.mdac.us

March 31, 2022

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Chair Pendergrass:

The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) strongly supports House Bill 1082 – Consumer Health Information Hub and Requirements. The bill will designate the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy (Center) as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub.

The Maryland Oral Health Plan, 2018-2023, specifically cites oral health literacy and education as an effective approach to improving the oral and overall health of all Marylanders and the Center's participation in statewide oral health awareness and education efforts have proved valuable and effective. As the Consumer Health Information Hub, the Center will further advance oral health literacy and health education efforts by:

Providing Maryland residents with accurate and easy to read information to improve their understanding of the importance of oral health, the relationship of oral health to overall health, and guidance on healthy behaviors and practices to prevent oral disease.

Increasing awareness and use of oral health resources that help health, human service, and non-traditional support professionals work with people to improve preventive oral health behaviors and better understand and navigate oral health care system.

Educating medical professionals about the importance of oral/systemic health connection and foster collaboration between medical and dental communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Mary Backley, CEO, at mbackley@mdac.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary C. Backley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary C. Backley
Chief Executive Officer

Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders

2022 MNA HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The bill recognizes the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub.

Nurses are responsible for supporting our patients in making treatment decisions, coordinating care, and obtaining needed resources through State and community programs. Patients, particularly when in the midst of dealing with a health care issue, are often overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive. We support initiatives by State and local agencies to provide streamlined information about community resources, insurance application requirements, and core public health information about chronic and acute diseases. This bill will assist those efforts by creating a center of health care literacy expertise.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

2022 PPM HB 1082 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV

Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Position: Support

Planned Parenthood of Maryland supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The legislation recognizes that the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub.

We have had first-hand experience of the valuable work of the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy. In 2014, the Maryland General Assembly enacted *Senate Bill 790 - Health Insurance - Communications Between Carriers and Enrollees - Conformity with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)*. Sponsored by Senator Delores Kelley, the bill required the Maryland Insurance Administration to create a state form that would allow people to redirect their insurance communications to a different address. Individuals with a heightened need for privacy, including those in situations of domestic abuse, could be endangered by an explanation of benefits form, or similar communication, going to the policy holder in their home. Federal law already allows people to redirect their insurance communications if they feel endangered, but few people knew about this HIPAA protection.

Planned Parenthood of Maryland supported *Senate Bill 790*, and upon its enactment, we collaborated with stakeholders in its implementation. We were pleased when the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy volunteered the Maryland Insurance Administration in creating a consumer-friendly form, rather than a form with dense legal language about HIPAA protections and insurance rules.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation because we believe other State and local agencies can benefit from the support of the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy in their efforts to produce consumer-friendly materials. If we can provide further assistance, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

2022 The Coordinating Center HB 1082 Senate Side.p

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



THE COORDINATING CENTER
INSPIRED SOLUTIONS

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Position: Support

The Coordinating Center supports *House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements*. The legislation recognizes that the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub.

Our organization’s mission is to support our clients in the community in achieving their aspirations for independence, health, and meaningful community life. Under programs sponsored by the Department of Health, we provide care coordination services for individuals with complex medical conditions. One of our primary responsibilities is to support families navigating complex health care systems to obtain needed at-home and specialty care services. Health literacy is key to our clients’ success.

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration under the Department of Health and Human Services, health literacy is “(t)he degree to which individuals can obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services necessary to make appropriate health decisions.”ⁱ However, not all State and local agencies have the internal resources to integrate the principle of health literacy into their programs. This legislation would support consumers in Maryland because State and local agencies could turn to the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub in creating materials ranging for eligibility applications to guidance about public health issues.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ <https://www.hrsa.gov/about/organization/bureaus/ohe/health-literacy/culture-language-and-health-literacy>

Testimony HB 1082.pdf

Uploaded by: Rodolfo Pérez

Position: FAV

Testimony to the Maryland General Assembly in Support of HB 1082
March 7, 2022

I support House Bill 1082 (HB1082) to designate the University of Maryland (UMD) Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy (Center) as the state's consumer health information hub. The Center has a proven record of advancing health literacy in Maryland and the nation, and this bill will amplify the Center's capacity to provide vital health literacy and resources to state and local agencies, health systems, nonprofit and community-based organizations.

I submit this testimony as a consumer and member of the Hispanic community, and with my full confidence that the Center is a responsible steward for public health.

Respectfully,

Rodolfo E. Pérez, P.E.
6 Manor Spring Court
Silver Spring, MD 20906

HB1082 Letter of Support -Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Pomerantz

Position: FAV



CommunicateHealth, Inc.

Support for House Bill 1082: Consumer Information Hub and Requirements

CommunicateHealth, Inc.
20 Courthouse Sq.
Rockville, MD 20850

Hearing date: March 31, 2022

CommunicateHealth, Inc. is a Maryland-based woman-owned small business focused on health literacy, communication, and human-centered design. Thirteen years ago, I founded CommunicateHealth on the belief that everyone deserves health information they can understand and use.

CommunicateHealth writes in strong support of HB1082. This bill will provide state and local government agencies, health systems, nonprofit, and community-based organizations with health literacy expertise and resources from the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy Center (“the Center”).

Nearly 9 out of 10 adults struggle with health literacy. People with limited health literacy skills are more likely to:

- Have poor health outcomes, including hospital stays and emergency room visits
- Have trouble understanding medication instructions
- Struggle to manage chronic diseases
- Skip preventive services, like flu shots

CommunicateHealth has partnered with the Center to create health materials that follow health literacy best practices. Doing so helps people make informed health decisions. That means they’re more likely to be healthy — and even to live longer. As the nation works to overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, improving health literacy and health outcomes will be essential to restoring our health care system, improving our public health workforce, and addressing clear societal inequities.

Designating the Center as the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub will benefit the people of Maryland and beyond. The Center has proven expertise in creating plain language communication tools and products that improve audiences' ability to use health information rather than just understand it. Investing resources in the Center will expand the Center’s capacity to deliver trainings and technical assistance to constituents, equipping them with

Commented [SR1]: Are constituents one-level removed from Maryland residents?

This line is a little confusing. Maybe: ...to constituents, equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge to improve the health literacy levels and health outcomes in their communities. ??

valuable skills and knowledge to improve the health literacy levels and health outcomes in their communities.

We urge the Senate Finance Committee to pass HB1082. Thank you for this opportunity to write in support of HB1082.

Sincerely,

Stacy Robinson
President, Co-founder
CommunicateHealth, Inc.

11d - HB 1082 - FIN - MACHO - LOSAA.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland

Position: FAV



**2022 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

COMMITTEE: Senate - Finance Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support

BILL ANALYSIS: HB 1082 designates the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub, requires state and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, and social services benefits, and establishes grant and requirements related to health literacy.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports HB 1082. This legislation will codify Maryland's support for advancing health literacy across the state. Health literacy is an essential component of public health and the medical care of individuals. Ensuring access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health information is a key component to reducing health disparities, optimizing lower-cost primary care services, and improving the overall health and wellbeing of our communities.¹ **The modest budgetary cost of this bill will almost certainly bring a substantial return on investment in the form of Medicaid savings.**

HB 1082 establishes the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub. The Hub will promote access to accurate, evidence-based, health, social service, and safety information. The Hub will provide critical technical assistance, trainings, and resources to state and local government agencies in addition to health systems, community-based organizations, and other applicable entities to improve and support health literacy across Maryland.

Many local health departments currently use the Herschel S. Horowitz Center for technical assistance and training on Health Literacy. We have found great value in the center's skills, knowledge, and comprehensive resources. LHDs believe that further efforts geared towards achieving health literacy at the local level are necessary to improve equity. As more healthcare information and services transition to web-based formats, both private and public organizations will benefit from expert guidance that the new Health Information Hub can provide.

In sum, high-risk families, physicians and nurses, hospitals, and public health agencies will all benefit from HB 1082's bolstering of the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy. For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of support for HB 1082. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

615 North Wolfe Street, Room E 2530 // Baltimore, Maryland 21205 // 410-937-1433

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2021). Health Literacy in Healthy People 2030.

<https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/healthy-people/healthy-people-2030/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030>

11b - HB 1082 - FIN - MHCC - LOSAA.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: FAV



BILL NO: HB 1082

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

POSITION: Support as Amended

TITLE: Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1082 - Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements (HB 1082) would designate the University of Maryland's Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub. HB 1082 also requires State and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, and social services benefits. The bill establishes grant requirements related to health literacy and supports development of staff training and standardized protocols for evaluating the appropriateness of health literacy initiatives. The bill provides that the provisions of this Act are not subject to judicial review and do not create a judicial or administrative right of action. The bill also requires the appropriation of \$350,000 each fiscal year beginning in 2024 to the State's Consumer Health Information Hub. The Consumer Health Information Hub shall become effective July 2022 and shall remain effective until June 30, 2026.

POSITION AND RATIONALE

The Maryland Health Care Commission supports HB 1082 as amended.

The mission of the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) includes promoting informed health care decision making by collecting and publicly reporting meaningful information on the availability, quality, and cost of services to Maryland consumers, providers, and other stakeholders. Our statute mandates public reporting on the quality and performance of Maryland health care providers including nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, home health, hospice, ambulatory surgery facilities and health plans.

Maryland government is committed to engaging Maryland residents in their own health care. Over the past two years, the challenges of earning and holding consumers attention has proven daunting. Regardless of whether one is promoting vaccination, educating on the Total Cost of Care Model, or informing patients on the quality and cost of different providers new ideas are always welcome. State agencies use plain language standards, seek guidance with consumer advocates and obtain input from consumer focus groups to guide our work

throughout the years. Given the array of health care sources, some credible others not, getting the right information at the right time to the right resident is an enormous challenge. Our *Healthcare Quality Reports* consumer website¹ is the vehicle through which we present our quality and performance data to the public. We know firsthand the importance of rapidly evolving information presentations to reflect the latest approaches and engaging trusted community members in promoting our work.

The MHCC supports the concept of a Consumer Health Information Hub to guide and coordinate the health literacy standards and requirements across State and local government agencies and to serve as a resource for health literacy initiatives. The Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy within the University of Maryland School of Public Health appears to have the expertise and infrastructure to serve in that capacity.

For these reasons, the Commission asks for a favorable report on HB 1082 as amended.

Note: The Maryland Health Care Commission is an independent State agency, and the position of the Commission may differ from the position of the Maryland Department of Health.

¹ (<https://healthcarequality.mhcc.maryland.gov/>)



11c - X - HB 1082 - FIN - CHRC - LOS.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: FAV



STATE OF MARYLAND

Community Health Resources Commission

45 Calvert Street, Room 336 • Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Edward J. Kasemeyer, Chair – Mark Luckner, Executive Director

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 1082 - Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) respectfully submits this Letter of Support for House Bill 1082 – Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements (HB 1082). The bill would accelerate efforts to promote health literacy in our state.

As you know, the CHRC was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 2005 to expand access to health services in underserved communities in our state. The CHRC has awarded 648 grants totaling \$111.9 million, supporting projects in all 24 jurisdictions of the state. These programs have collectively served more than 517,000 Marylanders, most of whom are impacted by complex health and social service conditions and face barriers in accessing health care in their communities. Health literacy is a key factor that impacts the ability of individuals to access health care services and it is especially important when developing programs that will improve access in underserved communities.

The CHRC has experience working with the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy at the University of Maryland School of Public Health. The Horowitz Center is providing technical assistance to the CHRC and its grantees, including Local Health Improvement Coalitions, as they implement CHRC-funded projects to address diabetes in their communities. Our experience working with the Horowitz Center has been favorable, and the CHRC looks forward to receiving future additional assistance contemplated under HB 1082.

Advancing health literacy is an important tool to help address the barriers that underserved communities face in accessing health care. Greater health literacy will ultimately support the state's overall policy goals of expanding health care access, reducing health disparities, improving health outcomes, and reducing avoidable hospital utilization.

For these reasons, the CHRC urges a favorable report on HB 1082. We are happy to answer any questions about our support of HB 1082 or the CHRC's experience working with the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mark Luckner
CHRC Executive Director

Note: The Maryland Health Care Commission is an independent State agency, and the position of the Commission may differ from the position of the Maryland Department of Health.

HB 1082 Consumer Health Info - Hub and Requirement

Uploaded by: Barbara Wilkins

Position: INFO



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lieutenant Governor

DAVID R. BRINKLEY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

HOUSE BILL 1082 Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements (Pena-Melnyk)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: March 31, 2022

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance

SUMMARY OF BILL: HB 1082 designates the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub; requires State and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, and social services benefits; and mandates \$350,000 annually to the Hub. The bill sunsets June 30, 2026.

EXPLANATION: The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy, but on the \$350,000 annual mandated appropriation provision, which impacts the FY 2024 budget and subsequent budgets.

DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

**For additional information, contact Barbara Wilkins at (410) 260-6371
or barbara.wilkins1@maryland.gov**

HB 1082 2022 MIA Letter of Information Agency Cros

Uploaded by: Kathleen Birrane

Position: INFO

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lt. Governor



Maryland

INSURANCE ADMINISTRATION

200 St. Paul Place, Suite 2700, Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Direct Dial: 410-468-2471 Fax: 410-468-2020
Email: kathleen.birrane@maryland.gov
www.insurance.maryland.gov

KATHLEEN A. BIRRANE
Commissioner

GREGORY M. DERWART
Deputy Commissioner

TESTIMONY OF
THE
MARYLAND INSURANCE ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

MARCH 31, 2022

HOUSE BILL 1082 – PUBLIC HEALTH - CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION - HUB AND REQUIREMENTS

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on HB 1082.

HB 1082 requires state and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety and social service benefits. The bill establishes the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horwitz Center for Health Literacy as the state's Consumer Health Information Hub. The Hub will assist the agencies by identifying health literacy challenges and developing resources which may be used by the agencies.

One of the core functions of the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) is to increase the public's understanding of the vital role insurance plays in their daily lives. During the Spring of 2021, the MIA conducted a Listening Session where we heard from a variety of stakeholders including health care providers; consumer advocates and consumers regarding the role insurance can play in addressing inequities in health care access and outcomes. One of the recurring messages was the importance of health literacy for consumers to obtain appropriate health care services. The speakers emphasized that oral and written communications should be easy for consumers to understand.

The MIA currently provides written materials; videos and presentations to consumers about their rights and responsibilities under their policies. The Hub could provide resources which would assist the MIA in its efforts.

The MIA supports the amendments to the Bill made in the Senate.

The MIA thanks the committee for its attention to this information concerning HB1082.