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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](#).