



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SENATE BILL 607**

Health Equity Resource Communities – Modifications

Before the Senate Finance Committee

By Stephanie Klapper, Deputy Director, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.

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Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 607, and special thank you to the sponsors of the bill. Thanks to the Committee's leadership, the Health Equity Resource Act passed in 2021 and the Pathways to Health Equity Program is underway, with projects in nine communities across the state selected by the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) last week to receive funding to reduce health disparities for their residents. SB 607 provides some technical changes to make the program stronger, including ensuring that the state's health information exchange has resources to assist with data needs, that the Pathways Program projects have enough time to get started before the Health Equity Resource Communities RFP opens, and that the program is fully staffed at CHRC. We commend the CHRC for how it is implementing the program so far, and with these technical changes the Health Equity Resource Act will have its best chance for success. Thank you again to the Committee for your recognized efforts toward improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. We urge a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 607.