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Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Hayes in Support of Senate Bill 607: Health Equity Resource Communities – Modifications

February 22, 2022

Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am pleased to introduce SB 607, which will make modest program adjustments to the Maryland Health Equity Resource (HERC) program, a landmark five-year program that was approved by the Senate unanimously last year to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes in underserved communities. I appreciate that my Chair, Senator Kelley, our Vice Chair, Senator Feldman, and Chair Guzzone and President Pro Tem Griffith are co-sponsors of SB 607.

As you will recall, the General Assembly approved last year the “Maryland Health Equity Resource Act,” or HERC Program, which I introduced, that provides a total of \$59 million over several years. The bill was approved last year by the Senate Finance Committee unanimously and by the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, and I’d thank Chair Guzzone and his Committee for identifying the funding for this important legislation.

The bill that I am introducing this year, SB 607, is a simple and straightforward bill that makes modest improvements that have been requested by the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission as they implement the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act in year two of the program. There is no fiscal note to the bill, and the bill would enable the CHRC to utilize the HERC fund in the FY 2023 budget to cover the staffing costs of two new PINs that are already included in the Governor’s budget for FY 2023. Mark Luckner, CHRC Executive Director, will be following my testimony to describe the intent of SB 607 further.

I am also pleased that the CHRC is moving forward expeditiously to implement the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act and they issued the first round of grant awards last week. I understand that nine initial grantees have been selected by the CHRC and two of these new grantees are here today to speak in support of SB 607 and describe how they will utilize the new funding made available by the Maryland General Assembly to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Antonio L. Hayes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Senator Antonio L. Hayes
40th Legislative District - MD