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HB 1082
Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub & Requirements
Hearing of the Senate Finance Committee
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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.