
**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland Senate
Finance Committee
For the Hearing on
Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Testing at a Community-Based Health Fair (SB 883)
March 16, 2022**

SUPPORT

Free State PTA represents over 40,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education.

Free State PTA submits this testimony enthusiastically *in support* of Senate Bill 883 – Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Testing at a Community-Based Health Fair. This is a very simple bill that broadens the opportunity to test individuals for the sickle-cell disease by allowing professionals the opportunity to test for this disease at a community-based health fair.

A community health fair is defined as an event that offers health care services to an individual for free or using a sliding fee scale that is sponsored by the three core levels of government, a 501c (3) nonprofit or a nonprofit community organization whose purpose is providing health care services to low-income individuals.

For years now, the PTA supports guidelines that highlight the need to address the health care concerns of children who have the sickle-cell disease. In particular, Chapter 385 of Acts of 2018, Public Schools – Students With Sickle Cell Disease – Guidelines required public schools to establish guidelines on the [administration](#) of health care services to students with sickle cell disease. The sickle-cell disease can be painful and oftentimes parents and children themselves are not aware that they may have the disease. Broadening the opportunity for testing of sickle-cell disease in the community increases the chances of addressing health ailments among youth much sooner and can possibly save their lives and that of their family members.

Free State PTA supports health services that appropriately reflect the community's commitment to address identified health problems that limit students' abilities to learn. The core way that sickle-cell disease limits a student's opportunity to learn is when they confront a health crisis that results in absenteeism from school and perhaps homecare. Indirectly, if their parents undergo a health crisis, then they aren't available for students at home because they are hospitalized. Community testing is a way to mitigate potential problems and begin to develop a network of [resources](#) to help families and communities live with sickle-cell in a manageable fashion. As the PTA is a 501c (3) nonprofit our local constituent units can be involved by using their parent members who may be health care professionals.

To allow testing for sickle-cell at a community health fair is in direct alignment of the Free State PTA's support for parent, family and community education that includes research and awareness of issues that affect children's

health and welfare. With the passage of such a bill, it will help our Association continue our advocacy for health and safety campaigns to properly identify, treat, and resolve those having a sickle-cell disease crisis.

It is for these reasons that Free State PTA urges you to support SB 883.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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