



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 13, 2023

To: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 296 - Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Dear Chair Feldman:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 296, which would establish a program in the Department of Housing and Community Development to fund home repairs to improve conditions in housing units and support workforce development programs. Housing quality and economic opportunity—social drivers of health—improve health outcomes.

Maryland hospitals care for millions of people each year, around-the-clock. In addition to the care they provide, they continuously evaluate factors inside and outside of their organizations to promote the health and the well-being of the populations they serve and the tens of thousands they employ. Hospitals are committed to addressing the social drivers of health, which includes cross-sector collaboration and investments outside of traditional health care settings.

The Office of the Surgeon General identified the leading causes of preventable death, disease, and disability as health hazards that may occur in homes.¹ Poor quality housing can raise the risk of infectious or chronic disease and exacerbate existing health conditions.² Addressing the quality of housing as a public health issue may prevent and reduce negative health outcomes.

The American Psychological Association considers financial stress and economic hardship leading stressors in America, with impacts similar to adverse childhood experiences. Financial stress and economic hardship are linked to increased physical pain, lowered pain tolerance, and risk of coronary heart disease.³

By aligning funding to improve the conditions of housing units and to reinforce workforce development efforts, SB 296 can positively influence two significant drivers of health.

¹ The surgeon general's call to action to promote healthy homes - NCBI ... (n.d.). Retrieved from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44192/

² Taylor, L. (2018). Housing and Health: An Overview of the Literature. Health Affairs. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180313.396577/>.

³ Weida, E. B., Phojanakong, P., Patel, F., & Chilton, M. (n.d.). Financial Health as a measurable social determinant of health. PLOS ONE. Retrieved from journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0233359

For these reasons, we request a favorable report on SB 296.

For more information, please contact:
Brian Sims, Vice President, Quality & Equity
Bsims@mhaonline.org