



Ivy and Pearls of Southern Maryland Community Charities, Inc.
P.O. Box 975
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Testimony in Support of House Bill 695: Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund -Revisions and Sunset Repeal

Sponsors: Del. Sample -Hughes and Adams

Presenter: Carmella Davis Watkins, Executive Director

This statement supports House Bill 695. The Rural Maryland Council's RMPIF is presently providing funds for an all-encompassing Health Program for this year. The African American women in the rural areas of Charles and St. Mary's Counties are targeted for this program. The Charles County Department of Health has partnered with IPSMCC and trained 5 Healthy Heart Ambassadors. At the MLK Day of Service at St. Mary's College, Ambassadors provided blood pressure screenings for attendees. A healthy eating presentation was also made during the session. In addition, the Ambassadors are monitoring at least 2 individuals monthly in person and virtually. On February 18, during a Homebuyers Seminar, blood pressure was screened by the Healthy Heart Ambassadors, and the seminar was kicked off with tips for healthy eating. Over 100 individuals have been reached to date.

Future programs include a Zumba session on March 24, which will feature a presentation on healthy eating and blood pressure screenings for participants. An all-encompassing Health Fair will be held in May. The Fair will provide tangible information and screenings related to chronic diseases for African American women, such as breast cancer, hypertension, smoking cessation, and diabetes. A Mobile unit will be secured to conduct mammograms for participants. The Health Fair partners will include African American fraternities and sororities, local chapters of The Links, inc., Top Ladies of Distinction, and local health providers.

In addition to the future programs mentioned, there are two mental health programs scheduled for April and May for African American women residing in Charles and St. Mary's Counties. The mental health programs will include information on ways to recognize and cope with mental health, along with self-care maintenance for residents. There will also be a Building Better Caregivers Program presented later in the Spring, which will touch on the mental health aspect of caregiving. In addition, materials will be distributed from NAMI.

In conclusion, these community programs would not be possible without funding from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund.