



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: SB 966: Prince George's County – Workgroup on Health & Wellness

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Griffith, Vice Chairwoman Klausmeier and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

Senate Bill 966 would establish a Prince George's County Health & Wellness workgroup. The workgroup would consist of the following members:

- The Chair of the Prince George's County Senate Delegation, or the Chair's designee,
- The Chair of the Prince George's County House Delegation, or the Chair's designee,
- The Chair of the Prince George's County Council, or the Chair's designee, and
- The following members, shall be appointed by the Chair of the Prince George's County Senate Delegation:
 - two representatives of small and local health and wellness businesses, and
 - one integrative health and wellness practitioner.
- The following members, shall be appointed by the Prince George's County Executive:
 - one certified dietitian providing services in Prince George's 4 County,
 - two health and wellness practitioners in Prince George's County, and
 - one representative of the Prince George's County Food Equity Council.

There is an **amendment** that would add *Prince George's Non-Profit*, as a member to the workgroup... they have requested to be added to the workgroup and we would love for them to be a part of this.

As it relates to the health and wellness of our state, I hope some of you will agree with me, that our focus is on DISEASE management... specifically in the black and brown communities. And many of the diseases that we are managing are related to lack of education and limited options and resources.

Therefore, SB 966 would require the workgroup to review:

- 1) the availability of health and wellness practices in the county,
 - 2) the available options for integrative health & wellness programs in the county,
- and

- 3) review programs that promote health eating withing the counties government agencies.

After reviewing these programs, the workgroup would be tasked with making recommendations regarding the best practices in the health and wellness community, including strategies and programs that:

- 1) promote healthy eating,
- 2) improve equitable access to healthy, affordable, and accessible food retailers,
- 3) improve access to gyms, rec centers, playgrounds, bike and walking paths,
- 4) promote healthy eating, physical activity, and healthy habits to prevent obesity.

The workgroup will also make recommendations for incentives that may be provided to employers who promote health and wellness strategies. Further, the workgroup will review, report, and evaluate the benefits and feasibility of integrative health and creating integrative health and wellness hubs in Prince George's County.

Also, there is another amendment that strikes the University of Maryland System as the staff and replaces it with the Maryland Department of Health in *cooperation* with the Prince George's County Department of Health. The workgroup would report their findings by December 2024.

In closing, I do not know all the answers, but I do know that we are in a health crisis in Prince George's County. In fact, according to the Harvard school of Health, 1 out of 6 children are obese, and 1 out of 3 children are overweight or obese. Unfortunately, there are several factors, but one factor is lack of education.

Therefore, it is for all these reasons and many more, that I urge and ask this body for FAVORABLE report for SB 966 as amended.