



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0281
SB0281 - Commission on Public Health - Establishment
Before the Senate Finance Committee
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
Hearing Date: 02/15/2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Oluwatosin Olateju. I am a Doctor of Public Health and an assistant professor of nursing. I am here on behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association and would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 0281. This bill would establish a commission to make recommendations that would strengthen the delivery of foundational public health services in the State.

The State's public health facilities continue to operate in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period while grappling with existing realities in the workforce, such as low salaries, recruitment and hiring challenges, and limited funding for public health programs¹ which can impact the ability for programs to achieve equitable outcomes. Consequently, it is essential to prioritize having a public health commission in place. Furthermore, It is important to note that the concept of foundational public health capabilities on cross-cutting skills and capacities needed to support essential public health protections have gained new salience.² Hence, the need for this commission to provide a comprehensive assessment of the capability of the Maryland Department of Health and local health departments in providing core public health services while considering factors such as the State's response to COVID-19 and overdose deaths, and to racial and ethnic disparities in maternal mortality and birth outcomes in the State.

The recommendations that are proffered upon completing this assessment could raise the benchmark of efficient and effective public health program delivery and ultimately improve the quality of the residents' health in the state. Therefore, we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 0281.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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¹ Nganga-Good, C., Chayhitz, M. & McLaine, P. (2022). Overcoming Barriers and Improving Public Health Nursing Practice. Public Health Nursing, 1-10.

² Tilgner, S. (2021). Public Health National Center for Innovations at the Public Health Accreditation Board and the Funders' Forum. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from <https://phnci.org/uploads/resource-files/FPHS-Background-Paper-2021.pdf>