



**SENATE BILL 628
School Based Health Centers**

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

I am founder of the Women of Color For Equal Justice a non-profit advocacy and policy group of women lawyers who litigate and develop legislation to seek equity and equality for communities of color and women of color.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of SB628 but with Amendments. While it is important that School Based Health Centers are properly funded and provided with new infrastructure to address new and emerging health issues amongst K-12 children, we have made an amendment to the bill to include infrastructure for the inclusion of "Teaching Kitchens" wherein children can be taught and shown how to cook whole minimally processed plant foods and take plant-based nutrition courses to also address childhood disease.

It is no secret that children in communities of color in Maryland suffer from chronic respiratory diseases caused by diet related factors and are more likely to live in food deserts where fresh whole plant foods are not always available, contributing to malnutrition and poorer health outcomes.

According to the CDC, the top causes of death of youth and infants is not the lack of vaccines or more drugs, but rather the top killers of children are listed below:

THE TOP THREE CAUSES OF DEATH BY AGE GROUP

0 to 1 year:

- Developmental and genetic conditions that were present at birth
- Conditions due to premature birth (short gestation)
- Health problems of the mother during pregnancy

1 to 4 years:

- Accidents (unintentional injuries)
- Developmental and genetic conditions that were present at birth
- Homicide

5 to 14 years:

- Accidents (unintentional injuries)
- Cancer
- Suicide (See report attached)

Finally, in 2022 homicide was declared the top killer of youth, in particular African-American youth between 14-18.

The data above, however, demonstrates efforts focused on reducing childhood genetic diseases, cancer, and health problems of the mother should be the primary focus of Health Centers on school campuses and in particular early education and demonstration of whole plant food nutrition. The evidenced based practice of Plant-Based Lifestyle Medicine should be taught to health care practitioners in Maryland schools so that “Plant Food As Medicine” can be prescribed for children to address the immediate health concerns that the CDC has reported are the causes of premature death in children. See THE TEN LAWS of Plant-Based Lifestyle Medicine - <https://hbcuplantbasedlifestyle.com/THE-TEN-LAWS-of-Lifestyle-Medicine-Scientific-Evidence.pdf>

Also, for the children whose parents for religious reasons choose not to vaccinate them or who may follow a “plant-based” lifestyle – Muslims, vegan Seventh-Day Adventist, Jewish Vegans, Scientologist etc., those parents will still receive federally funded information about how they can improve their child’s immune system naturally through plant nutrition. Parents who do not want to vaccinate their children must be given “alternative options” for treating their children. Failure to provide alternative medical interventions that can reduce risks of communicable diseases – which studies have shows – plant-based lifestyle Medicine can do, may also be a violation of federal law because those parents with religious practices will be left out of receiving “free health care” because of their faith. Our Amendment addresses that issue without marginalizing families who have different religious medical practices for managing their family’s healthcare needs.

Consequently, the Women of Color for Equal Justice hereby requests that the bill be amended to include infrastructure for a teaching kitchen for plant nutrition education and demonstration can be provided to children. Disease is not “caused” by the lack of medications and vaccines, disease is caused by poor and inadequate living plant food in the diet along with lifestyle interventions that when taught collectively can prevent most chronic disease in children and adults. See the studies below.

Thank you to the members of the committee for allowing me to testify in support of our friendly amendment.

Sincerely,

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See The History of Pandemics by Dr. Michael Greger, MD FACLM former Public Health Director at the HSUS in Washington DC -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_ppXSABYLY&t=1705s

See Nutrition Facts - <https://nutritionfacts.org/subscribe/>

See Studies re: Plant-Based Diets reduction of Covid-19

See Plant-based Research Database - <https://plantbasedresearch.org/>

See CDC Report - Underlying Medical Conditions Associated with Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19: Information for Healthcare Providers, Updated Oct. 14, 2021 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinicalcare/underlyingconditions.html>

See Nutritional status of micronutrients as a possible and modifiable risk factor for COVID-19: a UK perspective - British Journal of Nutrition (2021), 125, 678–684 - <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridgecore/content/view/35B4C4BC5B0FBD132370128EC03FE309/S000711452000330Xa.pdf/div-class-title-nutritionalstatus-of-micronutrients-as-a-possible-and-modifiable-risk-factor-for-covid-19-a-uk-perspective-div.pdf>

See Plant-based diets, pescatarian diets and COVID-19 severity: a population-based case–control study in six countries – BMJ Journal Jun 2021 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8219480/>

See Diet may affect risk and severity of COVID-19 - September 8, 2021, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/09/210908180530.htm>