

TO: The Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
Assistant Director, State Affairs

DATE: January 26, 2023

RE: HB214 Commission on Public Health – Establishment

Johns Hopkins **supports HB214 Commission on Public Health – Establishment**. This bill establishes the Commission on Public Health to make recommendations to improve the delivery of foundational public health services in Maryland. This Commission not only demonstrates the State’s acknowledgement of the importance of dedicating more resources to public health, but also the need to create intentional short- and long-term strategies that connect all of the aspects that impact public health and informs and insures resources are deployed to the best and highest purposes.

Johns Hopkins University and Medicine is a leader in public health. Whether through the research conducted at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, data collected and information disseminated through the Coronavirus Resource Center, or the vital preventative and community-based care provided across the State, Johns Hopkins plays an essential role in the provision of public health at all levels. This expertise and practical, hands-on experience provide an important perspective for policy makers as they work to address one of the State’s and Nation’s most complex problems.

Public health is an incredibly important field that promotes and protects the health of people and communities. Specifically, public health professionals deal with critical large-scale issues such as access to health care; chronic disease control; mapping, predicting, and containing outbreaks of infectious disease; as well as researching factors such as gender, poverty, and education that contribute to health outcomes. Public health also has close ties with medicine through clinical and biomedical research and healthcare policy. The relationship between public health and medicine has strengthened over time; commencing as simply “prevention” versus “treatment” to now understanding how both make for the healthiest population. The creation of this Commission would continue to develop this relationship to support the health of all Marylanders.

While the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of public health, it also exposed some of the existing limitations due to lack of investment in this field. The Commission proposed under this bill would provide the avenue for advocating and implementing the necessary investments to develop a comprehensive public health system in Maryland.

Accordingly, Johns Hopkins respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on **HB214**.