



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team**

**Committee:** Finance

**Testimony on:** SB0281 – Commission on Public Health – Establishment

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 15, 2023

**Bill Contact:** Senator Clarence Lam

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with members in all districts in Montgomery County as well as several neighboring counties. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all Maryland residents healthy and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. SB0281 directly addresses these goals.

Maryland's public health system has struggled to meet the opioid crisis and the numerous impacts of the COVID pandemic. It is important to investigate ways to strengthen our public health system so that it benefits all Maryland residents most effectively and equitably.

SB0281 will create a public health commission to assess the ability of the Maryland Department of Health and local health departments to provide core elements of health care in Maryland. Areas to be evaluated include communicable disease control, chronic disease and injury prevention, environmental public health, maternal, child and family health, and access to and linkage with clinical care. The commission will then recommend reforms to improve the delivery of essential public health services to all residents across Maryland.

Enactment of SB0281 and establishment of this commission will be the beginning of a four-year project to improve health equity and access to clinical care across Maryland. Expected results include creation of a behavioral health and drug treatment system in all counties for those seeking help and the ability to train more providers of essential health services.

SB0281 is supported by a number of Maryland public health organizations, including the Network for Public Health Law, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers, and Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Vice Dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Lori Doyle, director of public policy for the Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland, has emphasized that the goal of public health is to get people outpatient therapy and services before their condition deteriorates to the point where they end up in a hospital emergency room or in jail from drug addiction. Enactment of SB0281 is exactly the type of first step needed to achieve that goal.

DTMG is proud to join these distinguished public health experts in supporting SB0281, and we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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