



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 497 – Rural Health Collaborative Pilot Repeal and Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition Funding – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of information for House Bill (HB) 497 - Rural Health Collaborative Pilot Repeal and Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition Funding. HB 497 will repeal provisions of law that established and governed the Rural Health Collaborative (RHC) Pilot program within the Mid-Shore region. HB 497 further mandates the Governor to provide an appropriation for the operations of the Mid-Shore Health Improvement Coalition.

The RHC within the five Mid-Shore counties (Talbot, Dorchester, Caroline, Kent, and Queen Anne) was established to improve access and delivery of health services in rural areas; develop one or more innovative models for achieving that purpose; align strategies with the Maryland Medicare Waiver; select a site(s) for the Rural Health Complex model development; and demonstrate improved health outcomes for the population of the Mid-Shore.

During Fiscal Years (FY) 2019, 2020, and 2021, the RHC convened and developed the needs assessment and standards and criteria for future rural health complexes. In November 2020, the RHC Executive Committee recommended to the membership body that the RHC continue its work via the Mid-Shore Health Improvement Coalition, currently under revitalization in the Mid-Shore region. However, due to the structure prescribed in the RHC Pilot legislation, the group cannot transition without legislation. As a result, a formal Rural Health Complex has not been established at this time.

As drafted, HB 497 mandates the Governor provide a budget appropriation to fund the operations of the Mid-Shore Health Improvement Coalition. However, MDH notes there are no other mandated appropriations directly supporting the operations of other Local Health Improvement Coalitions across the state.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" and the last name "Scott" clearly distinguishable.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary