



TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 596: Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: February 28, 2023

The League of Women Voters Maryland supports **House Bill 596: Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023**.

Lack of easy access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation disproportionately affects the elderly, those with limited mobility, low-income Marylanders, and rural residents who often must travel long distances to reach healthcare services and providers. Without dependable transportation, healthcare appointments can be missed or rescheduled, resulting in delayed care and poorer health outcomes.

Reducing health disparities and improving equity can sometimes simply be a matter of removing transportation barriers to healthcare access. This is particularly important for patients with life-threatening conditions such as cancer or end-stage kidney disease, who need **consistent monitoring** of their condition and **strict adherence** to treatment plans such as radiation or dialysis.

The longer distances and increased travel time needed to reach healthcare services increases the transportation burdens of rural residents. Without a driver's license and reliable car, patients in rural areas have very limited options. Passage of House Bill 596 will reduce some of those transportation burdens by establishing the **Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation Program**, through which eligible individuals living in a rural county in Maryland will be able to easily access reliable transportation to hospital medical services.

The League of Women Voters believes that health care is a human right. All Maryland residents need access to affordable, equitable, quality health care. Any measure to increase that access will improve the medical system for everyone.

Because transportation is such an important social determinant of health in rural communities, **the League and its 1,500+ members urge the committee to give a favorable report to House Bill 596.**