



March 18, 2024

Ways & Means Committee

Bill: HB1524-Horse Racing - Racing Facility Ownership and Construction - Racing Operations

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair, Atterbeary and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB1524. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system, one of the largest employers in the Park Heights area of Northwest Baltimore. Our largest facility, Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center hosting up to 150 medical residents in a fully accredited medical education program is located adjacent to Pimlico Racecourse. In fact, LifeBridge purchased the easternmost twenty-two acres of the track's property in 2015, after enjoying full access from the owners for fifteen years prior to the purchase for daily parking by hospital employees.

LifeBridge has developed part of the property over the last couple of years including the Center for Hope, a Child Advocacy Center that is the largest in the state. Center for Hope is a comprehensive violence intervention and prevention "Center of Excellence." Programming in the building includes prevention and treatment for domestic violence, elder abuse, street violence (Safe Streets and hospital-based responders) and the Baltimore Child Abuse Center. This first improvement, along with implementation of the Park Heights Master Plan vision for housing, green space, a library, workforce housing and other projects throughout southern Park Heights, as well as complementary full-scale redevelopment of the Racecourse property, signal a community on the rise. We believe it is imperative to support workforce, housing, and safety in the surround communities. This has been a long-standing commitment to the community.

Siting the Center for Hope and other buildings and programming closer to the community not only helps LifeBridge make key services more accessible to the community, a goal under hospitals' global budget created as part of Maryland's hospital reimbursement system, but also serves as a catalyst for economic and community development in the surrounding Park Heights neighborhoods of Northwest Baltimore. For example, in addition to capital and program investments cited above, amenities we hope developed either on the parcels formerly part of the Racecourse property or throughout our community include housing for our medical residents, a grocery store, restaurants, retail and other projects that will attract homeowners and renters alike. Progress will be enhanced by the implementation and transition of the project to the new established entity who will bring the vision for the track building on the economic engine of the Preakness Stakes and promoting economic and community development throughout Northwest Baltimore.

We want to ensure that Lifebridge continues to be involved in the next phase of the Pimlico Site and how any planned projects impact our nearby property. Our community, employees, and patients appreciate the state's commitment to moving this development forward.

For all the above reasons, I urge you to give HB1524 **FAVORABLE** report.

For more information, please contact:

Jennifer Witten, M.B.A.

Vice President, Government Relations & Community Development

jwitten2@lifebridgedhealth.org

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