

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Favorable – HB 172, Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund – Alterations

Dear Chair Korman,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) writes in strong support of House Bill 172, Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund – Alterations. This legislation strengthens an already valuable grant program by expanding its reach and flexibility, ensuring that more communities—especially those historically underserved—can access resources that promote health, safety, and resilience.

Latino communities across Maryland continue to face stark disparities in environmental safety, infrastructure, and health access. Many neighborhoods lack adequate lighting, sidewalks, safe gathering spaces, and access to community-based health resources. These deficiencies contribute not only to increased health risks but also to diminished trust and engagement with local institutions. HB 172 responds directly to these challenges by broadening the scope of eligible projects, increasing access for community-based organizations, and removing rigid funding limits that often prevent smaller initiatives from receiving support.

By including a wider range of eligible applicants, the bill recognizes the vital role nonprofit and grassroots organizations play in addressing local health and safety needs. These groups are often best positioned to implement culturally responsive projects that reflect the lived experiences of the communities they serve. Whether through renovating local health centers, improving pedestrian infrastructure, or creating green spaces, the projects enabled by HB 172 represent more than physical improvements—they are investments in the long-term well-being and dignity of Maryland's most vulnerable neighborhoods.

For Latino and immigrant communities in particular, the passage of this bill would mean safer streets, increased access to preventative health care, and a greater sense of belonging in the places they call home. It would also stimulate local economies by supporting workforce development and community revitalization efforts—priorities that align directly with MLU's mission to eliminate structural inequities and uplift under-resourced populations across the state.

We respectfully urge the Environment and Transportation Committee to give HB 172 a favorable report. Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to a more just, healthy, and equitable Maryland.

Sincerely,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.

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