



January 30, 2024

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

BILL: SB 129 – Public Health – Maryland Commission on Health Equity – Advisory Committee and Hospital Reporting.

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support SB 129 – Maryland Commission on Health Equity – Advisory Committee and Hospital Reporting. This bill would require the Maryland Commission on Health Equity to establish a health equity measure advisory committee to determine the 10 widest disparities in health care quality, access or outcomes for vulnerable populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, unhoused individuals, people with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community.

Our current health care system is built upon long-standing structural inequities that we have yet to solve. Many Marylanders of color lack access to quality health care and often contend with lower-value or suboptimal care. Often, this is accompanied by stark inequities with respect to housing, economic stability, educational attainment and other social determinants of health. During the Foundation’s most recent strategic planning process, many community members of color and low-income residents cited difficulties in accessing quality and culturally competent health care, the continuum of care and multiple social determinants of health as being significant barriers to their ability to thrive.

This bill would help gather and publish needed data about the most significant health disparities that exist in our communities and provide actionable, measurable strategies to reduce those disparities. We believe health is a fundamental right and that everyone deserves a fair opportunity to attain it at the highest level.

For this reason, the Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 129 and urges a FAVORABLE report.**

Thank you for your consideration.

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