



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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Senate Finance Committee

January 30, 2025

SB 129: Public Health - Maryland Commission on Health Equity - Advisory Committee and Hospital Reporting Letter of Information

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council), a statewide public policy organization led by people with developmental disabilities and their families, envisions Maryland as a state where people with and without disabilities live, learn, work, and play together. From this perspective, SB 129 is a step toward achieving a healthier Maryland for all.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Establishes the Health Equity Measures Advisory Committee to support the work of support the existing Maryland Commission on Health Equity.
- Clarifies the work of the Maryland Commission on Health Equity to include what groups and disparities to focus on; reviewing the health equity reports submitted by licensed hospitals; and making recommendations to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health.
- Clarifies requirements for health equity reports submitted by licensed hospitals.

WHY is this legislation important?

- There are many Marylanders with disabilities in need of greater equity in their health care. People with disabilities experience more unmet medical needs and chronic conditions compared to nondisabled people.¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 24% of Marylanders have a disability.
- Working to improve health equity creates improvements for all Marylanders. Health equities are inter-connected: People with disabilities with other underserved racial, ethnic, or gender identities experience profound health inequities. For example, if you are a pregnant woman with a disability, you have eleven times the risk of maternal death compared to a pregnant woman without a disability.

While investments in health equity are without question needed, including for people with disabilities, the Council believes that the amount, purpose, and timing of the funding must take into consideration the needs of other Marylanders with disabilities. Funding for this bill should not be offset by limiting essential funding for other critical needs, most immediately the Developmental Disabilities Administration community services that thousands of Marylanders depend upon.

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¹ <https://www.ncd.gov/assets/uploads/reports/2023/ncd-framework-to-end-health-disparities-of-people-with-disabilities.pdf>