



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chairwoman Pamela Beidle

Finance Committee

2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bill 129 (SB129) – Public Health – Maryland Commission on Health Equity – Advisory Committee and Hospital Reporting. This bill requires the Maryland Commission on Health Equity, in coordination with the Maryland Department of Health, to establish an advisory committee to address health disparities in Maryland's healthcare system and mandates that licensed hospitals submit annual health equity reports. Senate Bill 129 represents a critical step forward in promoting health equity for all Marylanders, especially those in historically underserved communities, including African Americans. **This bill is on the 2025 Black Caucus legislative priority agenda.**

LBCMD strongly believes that health equity must be a priority for policymakers. African Americans in Maryland continue to face significant health disparities that negatively affect overall quality of life. These disparities are particularly pronounced in areas such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, maternal mortality, and mental health, and they are exacerbated by factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and geographic location. The health outcomes of Black Marylanders, particularly those in rural or underserved urban areas, continue to lag behind those of other populations. Senate Bill 129 seeks to address these inequities by fostering greater accountability and transparency in how hospitals report and address health disparities, with a focus on vulnerable populations, including Black and minority Marylanders.

Senate Bill 129's requirement for annual health equity reports from hospitals is a necessary measure to bring attention to the persistent health disparities faced by African Americans. These reports will include an analysis of health disparities disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and other factors, allowing for a clear picture of how these inequities persist. By requiring hospitals to publish these

reports, the bill ensures that the public has access to this vital information, fostering transparency and encouraging hospitals to adopt effective strategies to address disparities. The health equity strategies required in the reports must address areas like patient safety, care coordination, social determinants of health, and access to care—all of which are key factors in improving the health outcomes of Black Marylanders.

Additionally, the establishment of a Health Equity Measures Advisory Committee will allow for a comprehensive review of hospital performance on equity and provide the necessary oversight to ensure that hospitals are working toward measurable

improvements in reducing health disparities. The committee's ability to identify the 10 widest disparities in healthcare and recommend actionable solutions is critical in targeting the most pressing issues facing our communities.

For Maryland's Black communities, the impact of this bill cannot be overstated. It will help create a more equitable healthcare system where hospitals are held accountable for their role in reducing health disparities. By focusing on the factors that disproportionately affect African Americans, Senate Bill 129 is a direct response to the longstanding health inequities that have plagued Black Marylanders for far too long.

Senate Bill 129 aligns with the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland's ongoing commitment to advancing policies that promote equity, accountability, and justice in our healthcare system. This bill represents a significant step toward improving health outcomes and ensuring that Maryland's healthcare system serves all residents fairly and equitably, with particular attention to communities of color. We urge your support for Senate Bill 129, as it offers a proactive and thoughtful approach to addressing the systemic health disparities that disproportionately affect Black Marylanders. For these reasons, we urges you to vote favorably on Senate Bill 129.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland