



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 1426 - Carroll County – Board of Health and Health Department - Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of opposition for House Bill (HB) 1426 – Carroll County – Board of Health and Health Department. HB 1426 would establish the Carroll County Board of Commissioners as the Carroll County Board of Health, requiring certain actions related to operations, records, and evaluations for the Carroll County Health Department. The bill would further authorize the Board of Health to remove the Health Officer or a Deputy Health Officer under certain circumstances. As written, the bill's provisions impinge on the State's authority, as all health officers, with the exception of the Baltimore City Health Commissioner, and many deputy health officers are state employees.

The Department supports the contributions of local boards of health or health commissions to prioritize local needs, guide community health assessments, and develop place-based strategies for improving community health. However, local health officers are state employees, subject to the state personnel system, and applicable laws, and regulations. The Department works in close coordination with county governments to recruit and appoint health officers and deputy health officers, as well as address health challenges. The county receives extensive benefits from being part of the state - including but not limited to the personnel management system, funding, benefits, and pension for employees, connection to financial and data systems, access to technical assistance, and direct connections to the Deputy Secretary, legal support, and more.

As written, the bill would create a special carve-out for Carroll County as to the Secretary's authority under Health-Gen Code §3-302, which currently states:

(f) the health officer for a county serves at the pleasure of the governing body of that county and the Secretary.

(g) the health officer for a county may be removed from office with the concurrence of the governing body of that county and the Secretary.¹

The Department has an interest in maintaining the current supervisory structure and ensuring consistency in oversight of local health departments. Changes to the Secretary's authority in this manner would impede the proper functioning of the state and local health departments and the Department's mission to improve health and well-being for all Marylanders.

For these reasons, the Department recommends against the requirements in this bill.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'LH Scott', is positioned above the printed name of the Secretary.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

¹ MD Health-Gen Code § 3-302 (2013).