



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

*Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary*  
January 29, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk  
Chair, Health and Government Operations  
240 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

**RE: House Bill (HB) 141 – Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation – Letter of Information**

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) submits this letter of information on HB 141 which would establish a State Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation (Task Force) to evaluate the causes and factors contributing to the feelings of loneliness and isolation experienced by individuals in Maryland.

The Department recognizes that loneliness and isolation can lead to mental health concerns and diagnoses such as depression and substance use disorders. The Department concurs that addressing these issues is a key to improving Marylander's well-being; however, the Department believes that the proposed approach of the Task Force can be incorporated into existing work across the State. Currently the Maryland Department of Health convenes the Behavioral Health Advisory Council, the Commission on Behavioral Health Treatment and Access, and the Commission on Public Health. These Commissions are representative of a broad swath of state agencies as well as members of the community and have the ability to convene around this issue with a diverse set of stakeholders. Moreover, the National Institute on Aging recently released a Social Isolation and Loneliness Outreach Toolkit<sup>1</sup> that ranges from social media images to health information to videos that have been made available for broad dissemination.

The experience of loneliness and isolation can vary significantly across different populations, such as for older adults compared to the impact on adolescents. The Task Force's potential recommendations alone cannot fully resolve the complex and multifaceted issues related to loneliness and isolation. We strongly believe that existing forums can be utilized to develop recommendations to be incorporated into existing and future behavioral health initiatives.

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](mailto:sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> NIH Social Isolation and Loneliness Outreach Toolkit <https://www.nia.nih.gov/toolkit/social-isolation>

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Laura Herrera Scott'.

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH  
Secretary