



TESTIMONY FOR SB0790 – Public Health Reform Act – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Lam

Committee: Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0790 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. Our coalition represents more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district, united by a commitment to ensuring that state policy protects people’s health, stability, and well-being. We believe the government has a responsibility to act proactively—especially when the health of our communities is at stake.

SB0790 does exactly that.

This bill implements essential structural reforms to strengthen Maryland’s public health system. It directs the Maryland Department of Health to organize the Maryland Medical Reserve Corps, modernizes the membership and leadership structure of the Commission on Public Health, and ensures that the Commission provides oversight of the implementation of its own recommendations. SB0790 also establishes the Public Health Workforce Development Fund and requires the Department of Legislative Services to develop a process for assessing the health equity impacts of relevant legislation. Together, these reforms create a more coordinated, accountable, and equity-focused public health infrastructure.

These improvements are not theoretical. They are urgently needed.

Maryland’s public health system continues to face workforce shortages, fragmented coordination, and longstanding inequities that disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color. Without the reforms in SB0790:

- The Medical Reserve Corps may remain -organized and underutilized during emergencies
- The Commission on Public Health may lack the structure needed to drive meaningful, sustained improvements
- Workforce shortages could worsen without dedicated investment
- Health equity considerations may be inconsistently applied across legislation
- Maryland could miss opportunities to strengthen preparedness, prevention, and community-level health outcomes

SB0790 addresses these systemic gaps by building a stronger, more resilient public health foundation. It ensures that Maryland is better prepared for emergencies, more capable of addressing health disparities, and more intentional in evaluating the equity impacts of policy decisions.

This legislation aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens public health capacity, advances equity, improves statewide coordination, and ensures that Maryland's systems are equipped to protect the health and dignity of every resident.

No community should be left vulnerable because our public health infrastructure lacks the tools, structure, or workforce it needs. SB0790 helps ensure that doesn't happen.

Thank you for your time and consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0790.**