

January 23, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone

Chair, Finance Committee

3 West Miller Senate Office Building

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Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB 19, Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement, Establishment

Dear Chair Guzzone,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is honored to express our strong support for Senate Bill 19, Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement, Establishment. SB 19 establishes a commission to study the feasibility of establishing a State women's hospital in Southern Maryland and a statewide clinical network to advance women's health, and requires an initial action plan to be submitted by January 1, 2027. SB 19 is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee on January 27, 2026 at 2:30 p.m., and the bill's effective date is July 1, 2026.

Women's health infrastructure and coordinated care networks are critical for reducing preventable harm during pregnancy and across the life course. Maryland's Maternal Mortality Review reports that the state's maternal mortality rate in the 2016 to 2020 period is below the national average, while also emphasizing the human cost of each death and the need for continued system improvement. Strengthening women's health planning and access points is especially meaningful for Latino and immigrant women who may face language barriers, lack of culturally responsive care, transportation constraints, and delays in accessing preventive services.

A commission with a clear action plan mandate can help Maryland identify service gaps, strengthen referral pathways, and recommend evidence driven investments. A statewide clinical network approach is particularly promising for improving continuity of care, which is often where disparities widen for patients navigating multiple systems.

MLU will support SB 19's goals by elevating community experience into planning conversations, partnering with health equity organizations, and promoting culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach so Latino families can benefit from improved networks and care coordination.

MLU urges the Senate Finance Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 19, advancing women's health equity and strengthening the systems that keep families healthy and thriving.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

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