



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 19
Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement – Establishment
Faith Elise Metlock, Postdoctoral Fellow
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Honorable Chair and Members of the Maryland Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 19, which establishes the Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement to study the feasibility of a State women's hospital and a statewide clinical network to improve women's health across the lifespan. As a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and a cardiovascular nurse scientist engaged in community-based research, I bring a perspective shaped by direct engagement with women across Maryland who continue to face persistent gaps in access, coordination, and quality of care.

Through my work on the SAFE HEART Women Study, my team and I have engaged with more than 400 women in Baltimore and the Washington, D.C. region, many of whom experience multiple, overlapping health and social challenges. One of the most consistent themes across our work has been fragmentation in women's health care. Participants often navigate separate systems for reproductive health, chronic disease management, mental health services, and preventive care, with little coordination across providers or settings. These gaps are particularly pronounced for women facing financial strain, transportation barriers, insurance limitations, and caregiving responsibilities. Senate Bill 19 responds directly to these realities by creating a structured process to evaluate how Maryland can better organize and deliver women-centered care.

A central strength of this bill is its emphasis on feasibility and evidence-based planning rather than immediate implementation. By convening clinicians, public health experts, patient advocates, insurers, data specialists, and representatives from diverse regions of the state, the proposed Commission is well positioned to examine where women's health care delivery falls short and what models may best address those gaps. Importantly, the bill also directs the Commission to consider alternatives to a single-site hospital, including network-based and hub models that build on existing infrastructure. This flexibility is essential to ensuring that any future investments are both equitable and sustainable.

In our research, education and access to coordinated care have consistently emerged as powerful drivers of improved health outcomes. When women understand their health risks and have clear pathways to appropriate services, they are better able to engage in preventive care, manage chronic conditions, and advocate for themselves within the health system. Participants in our

study frequently expressed a desire for more comprehensive, women-centered care models that acknowledge their full range of health needs across different life stages. The Commission proposed under Senate Bill 19 creates an opportunity to thoughtfully explore how such models could be designed and implemented in Maryland.

Women's health is not limited to pregnancy or reproductive years alone. Cardiovascular disease, metabolic conditions, mental health, and the health needs of women during midlife and aging remain leading contributors to morbidity and mortality. These conditions disproportionately affect women from underserved communities and are often under-recognized or undertreated. By explicitly framing women's health across the lifespan and prioritizing equity, Senate Bill 19 aligns with the realities we observe in community-based research and clinical practice.

Through my work, I have seen how intentional planning, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making can lead to more effective and equitable health systems. Senate Bill 19 represents an important step toward understanding how Maryland can better meet the needs of women across the state, whether through a dedicated facility, a coordinated clinical network, or a combination of approaches. This bill does not presume a single solution, but instead commits the state to doing the careful work needed to identify the right one.

I respectfully urge this committee to support Senate Bill 19. By establishing the Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement, this legislation lays the groundwork for a more coordinated, equitable, and responsive approach to women's health care, with the potential to improve outcomes for women, families, and communities across Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to advancing health equity for all Marylanders.



Faith Elise Metlock
Postdoctoral Fellow, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing
Co-Principal Investigator, SAFE HEART Women Study
525 N. Wolfe Street, Baltimore, MD 21205
P. 216.835.8009 | E. fmetlock@gmail.com

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