



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 178

DATE: February 10, 2026

SPONSOR: Delegate Patterson

ASSIGNED TO: Health

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POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS (Department of Health and Human Services)

Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Specialized Clinics and Scholarship Program for Medical Residents

House Bill 178 requires the Maryland Department of Health to establish three specialized clinics in the State dedicated to the management and treatment of sickle cell disease. Montgomery County is named in the bill as a location for one of the clinics, which would operate through a hub-and-spoke model between a care hub and the clinics to provide routine care, pain management, genetic counseling, mental health services, surveillance, and patient education. The bill requires a \$6.1M appropriation in the fiscal year 2028 budget to support clinic operations, staffing, training, and social support services, with a portion allocated to community-based organizations and non-profit organizations to enhance patient outreach, provide education, expand support services, and strengthen community partnerships to improve sickle cell disease care.

House Bill 178 seeks to address health disparities that disproportionately affect Black and African American residents as they are most impacted by sickle cell disease. Establishing a specialized clinic in Montgomery County will improve access to care, disease management, and health outcomes for affected individuals. Additionally, offering financial incentives for medical residents specializing in hematology with a focus on sickle cell disease will help build a more diverse and culturally competent healthcare workforce, further advancing health equity and long-term sustainability of care. For these reasons, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services supports House Bill 178 with the following amendments: 1) add language to clarify that the clinics will be housed in a health care setting such as a hospital or research entity and not within local government, as the infrastructure needed to establish and support these clinics is larger than what a local health department can sustain; and 2) amend the scholarship under the bill to a stipend, as medical residents have graduated from medical school and are not students, therefore would not benefit from a scholarship per se.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 178 with these amendments to move the State forward in addressing the laudable goal of improving care for residents with sickle cell disease.