



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville

HB 637 – Public Health – Recommendations for Immunizations, Screenings, and Preventive Services – Pharmacist Administration and Required Health Insurance Coverage (The Vax Act)

Good afternoon, Chair Bagnall and members of the House Health Committee. I am Rockville Mayor Monique Ashton, and I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 637. We thank House Speaker Peña-Melnyk and colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation on behalf of the Moore Administration.

The Rockville Mayor and Council unanimously support HB 637, which aligns with our priority to protect the health and safety of residents in our community. We strongly support vaccines, as they remain one of the most powerful public health tools used to protect against severe illness. Recent shifts in Federal processes away from evidence-based medical guidance grounded in rigorous science are very concerning.

We support this legislation for the following reasons:

- It establishes new authority for the Secretary of Health to issue official recommendations for immunizations, screening, and preventive services for the State based on rigorous science and clinical guidance.
- HB 637 decouples the State's vaccine authority from the Federal government bodies that have recently shifted their processes. The Secretary of Health is required to follow the authoritative medical organizations that issue independent recommendations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), while giving the Secretary the option of considering guidance from Federal agencies and task forces.
- The bill requires Maryland health insurers to provide coverage at zero cost share for immunizations, screenings, and preventive services that are recommended by the Secretary of Health, supporting the preservation of equitable access and preventing financial barriers to care.

HB 637 is a significant step forward for Maryland to continue safeguarding the health and safety of its residents. We applaud the Moore Administration for protecting our communities by quickly adjusting State vaccine policy in response to a shifting Federal policy landscape. For these reasons, we urge the committee to provide HB 637 with a favorable report. Thank you.