



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the House Health Committee
Chair: Delegate Heather Bagnall
March 9, 2026

House Bill 1316: Public Health - Universal Health Care Program - Study and Commission

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) offers a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT testimony in support of House Bill 1316: Public Health - Universal Health Care Program - Study and Commission.

MRHA supports HB 1316, which establishes the Advisory Commission on Universal Health Care to assist the UMBC Hilltop Institute in finalizing recommendations from their study on the feasibility of establishing a single-payer health care system in Maryland. MRHA is specifically in alignment with the program's goal to increase health care access in rural settings with limited access to health care services, as outlined in the bill.

Amendment recommendation: MRHA suggests that a representative of the Maryland Rural Health Association be included in the Advisory Commission on Universal Health Care. This would allow the representation of Commission members to further reflect the geographic and population density diversity of the state, as listed in the bill. As 18 of Maryland's 24 counties are designated as rural, MRHA's contributions to the Commission would ensure that recommendations are made with these rural counties in mind.¹ Rural regions face unique health challenges, including hospital budget shortfalls, health provider shortages, and longer travel distances to health facilities, and MRHA would like to ensure that our association's member organizations are adequately represented in discussions of moving toward a single-payer system.

MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we urge you to provide a favorable report with amendment on HB 1316.

With appreciation,
The Maryland Rural Health Association

1. Maryland Department of Health. Rural Health. Maryland Department of Health website. Accessed March 3, 2026. <https://health.maryland.gov/pophealth/pages/rural-health.aspx>