



TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH COMMITTEE

HB1367- Commission on Re-Imagining Health Care in Maryland

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. It believes that every Maryland resident should have access to affordable, equitable, quality health care. **It supports House Bill 1367, which would establish a Commission to study the strengths and deficiencies of Maryland's current healthcare system, and make recommendations on how to establish a new one.** A "re-imagined" health care system would be comprehensive, integrated, patient centered, and financially sustainable. It would improve access to healthcare services at every stage of life, reduce healthcare workforce shortages, and **prioritize policies to reduce any health disparities, whether they be racial, economic, gender-based, or geographic.**

Current health disparities are linked to social determinants of health. While Maryland is the home of some world-renown health facilities, its maternal mortality rate is higher than the national average, at 19.7 deaths per 100,000 births.¹ Twenty of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions are designated as mental health professional shortage areas. While the state's average life expectancy is higher than the national average,² eight Maryland jurisdictions have life expectancies lower than the national average. Maryland's rural residents, comprising 30% of the state's population, have "rates of preventable heart disease deaths significantly higher in rural areas compared to large central suburban areas."³

Health care access is limited by lack of health insurance, the administrative complexities built in to some health plans, shortages of primary and behavioral health care providers, unbalanced distribution of specialty health care resources, lack of care coordination for complex or disabled patients, rising medical mistrust, cultural and language barriers, long ER wait times, or poor public transportation. All of these healthcare barriers can lead to preventable suffering, preventable disability, preventable death.

A re-imagined Maryland health care system in Maryland can improve access to healthcare services and reduce health disparities for all Maryland residents. **The League of Women Voters and its 2,000 members urge the committee to give a favorable report to House Bill 1367.**

¹ https://democrats-waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-waysandmeans.house.gov/files/documents/Maryland%20Health%20Equity%20Facts_0.pdf

² <https://marylandmatters.org/2024/09/19/cdc-maryland-saw-slight-increase-in-life-expectancy-in-2021-in-depths-of-pandemic/>

³ <https://www.umaryland.edu/news/archived-news/june-2025/-bridging-the-rural-healthcare-gap.php>