



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

February 10, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall  
Chair, House Health Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: House Bill 178 – Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Specialized Clinics and Scholarship Program for Medical Residents – Letter of Concern**

Dear Chair Bagnall and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of concern for House Bill (HB) 178 – *Public Health - Sickle Cell Disease - Specialized Clinics and Scholarship Program for Medical Residents*. HB 178 would require the Department to establish three specialized clinics for the management and treatment of sickle cell disease and to create a scholarship program for medical residents specializing in benign or classical hematology with a focus on sickle cell disease.

The Department strongly supports the intent of this legislation to improve access to care for people living with sickle cell disease. The Department recognizes the critical need for expanded services and training within this community and has been working to strategically utilize funding already designated by the General Assembly to enhance sickle cell disease programs.

The Department is fully supportive of efforts to strengthen care for the sickle cell disease community in Maryland, as demonstrated by the ongoing programs and initiatives the Department actively manages. Our foremost priority is to protect and advance the health of marginalized communities, including those affected by sickle cell disease, and recognize the profound importance of expanded access to specialized care and professional training in this field. At the same time, in light of the current uncertainties in both federal and State fiscal conditions, potential changes in federal policy, and other ongoing budgetary pressures, the Department must be deliberate and disciplined in its allocation of resources.

Ensuring that funding decisions are strategically balanced allows the Department to continue providing essential services that support the health and well-being of all Marylanders. While the objectives of HB 178 are deeply aligned with the mission of the Maryland Department of Health, there would be a fiscal impact to the Department to establish multiple specialized clinics and a scholarship program. The Department remains committed to working collaboratively to identify

responsible approaches that advance care for the sickle cell disease community while maintaining the sustainability of the broader health system.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at [meghan.lynch@maryland.gov](mailto:meghan.lynch@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meena Seshamani', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D.  
Secretary