



February 17, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 882 - Consumer Health Information - Termination Date and Mandatory Funding for the State's Consumer Health Information Hub - Repeal

Dear Chair Bagnall and Committee Members,

The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) respectfully submits this letter of support on *House Bill (HB) 882 - Consumer Health Information - Termination Date and Mandatory Funding for the State's Consumer Health Information Hub – Repeal*. This bill repeals the June 30, 2026, termination date for the State’s Consumer Health Information Hub and the associated \$350,000 mandated appropriation. Under this legislation, the hub will instead operate to the extent that funding is available.

Since 2022, the Maryland Health Care Commission has worked closely with the Consumer Health Information Hub to improve the clarity, accessibility, and usefulness of our public-facing communications, most notably our Quality Reporting consumer website. This website provides Maryland residents with critical information on the quality, safety, and cost of care across a wide range of healthcare settings, including nursing homes, assisted living programs, hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, and other provider types. It includes consumer ratings, standardized quality measures, and pricing information for certain hospital services and nursing home care.

As the Committee knows, health information is often complex, technical, and difficult for the public to interpret. As a practicing physician, I have seen firsthand how confusing health information can undermine patients’ ability to access care, compare options, and make informed decisions. Clear communication is not a “nice to have”—it is essential to patient safety, equity, and effective use of our healthcare system.

The Consumer Health Information Hub has been an invaluable partner in helping MHCC meet this responsibility. The Hub provided structured, expert guidance on applying health literacy principles to real-world state communications. It facilitated monthly convenings of state agency staff responsible for public-facing materials, creating a collaborative space to share challenges, learn from one another, and adopt best practices for communicating complex health information in plain language.

Through this work, the Hub developed and disseminated a Health Literacy Toolkit and Checklist that agency staff can use to systematically assess and improve written and digital content. The Hub also conducted webinars to build staff capacity and awareness around health literacy and plain language standards, ensuring that these principles are embedded across communications, not just isolated projects. Importantly, the Hub supported the development of health literacy standards for state procurement and contracting, helping institutionalize these practices for long-term impact.

The Hub also prioritized community input. It sponsored a dedicated learning session with community health workers, who reviewed the Quality Reporting website and provided practical, user-centered feedback on its content and functionality. Their insights were invaluable and are directly informing our future website redesign efforts, ensuring the site better meets the needs of the populations it is intended to serve.

Most recently, the Hub launched a Health Literate Organization Seal program to recognize state agencies that demonstrate a sustained commitment to clear, accessible communication with the public. MHCC intends to apply for this designation as a way to formally demonstrate our commitment to health literacy, transparency, and informed healthcare decision-making for Maryland residents.

Lastly, the Consumer Health Information Hub has played a critical role in strengthening the State's capacity to communicate effectively with the public about healthcare quality and access. Its work advances patient understanding, supports equity, and helps Marylanders make better-informed decisions about their care. Continued support for the Hub is an investment in clearer communication, better outcomes, and a more navigable healthcare system for all Marylanders.

For these reasons, the Maryland Health Care Commission strongly supports HB 882 and urges a favorable report.

If you have any questions or if we may provide you with any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at douglas.jacobs@maryland.gov or 410-764-3566 or Ms. Tracey DeShields, Director of Policy Development and External Affairs, at tracey.deshields2@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DJ', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Douglas Jacobs, MD, MPH
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Aaron M. Kaufman, Delegate, House of Delegates, Health Committee
The Honorable Deni Taveras, Delegate, House of Delegates, Health Committee

