

MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Serving Maryland and Delaware



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TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Melony Griffith
The Honorable Steve Hershey

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 13, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT REGARDING FUNDING** – Senate Bill 501 –
*Maryland Loan Assistance Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants –
Administration and Funding*

The Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC) is the federally designated Primary Care Association for Delaware and Maryland Health Centers. Its members consist of community, migrant and homeless health centers, local non-profit and community-owned healthcare programs, including all of Maryland's federally qualified health centers (FQHCs). MACHC's members provide health care services to the medically underserved and uninsured. MACHC is built on helping our members in the delivery of accessible, affordable, cost effective, and quality primary health care to those in need. MACHC supports Senate Bill 501 which enhances the funding for the Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP) and moves administration of the program from the Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to the Department of Health (MDH). MACHC acknowledges that there must be a resolution of the funding sources for increasing the LARP program but is not weighing in on how best that should be accomplished.

MACHC has historically been a strong supporter of the LARP, which provides loan repayment assistance to physicians and PAs who agree to work in underserved areas of the State for a period of 2 years or more. FQHCs are by definition located in federally designated health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) and are acutely aware of the challenges medically underserved areas have in recruiting health care providers. Typically, Maryland's FQHCs, because of their location in HPSAs, are able to access the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program to assist in recruiting health care providers. The National Health Service Corps program also requires a recipient to serve of a period of at least 2 years in a HPSA designated area. However, if HPSAs are realigned federally or an FQHC or other community-based health care program expands their services into State designated shortage areas, the State's LARP could be a critical resource in recruiting health care professionals.

MACHC strongly supports enhanced funding for LARP. They also strongly support the transfer of the LARP program from MHEC to MDH as MDH is historically the agency that selects the recipients and is better suited to ensure the program is both accountable and maximizes the objectives of addressing health professional shortages. MACHC understands that there is dialogue amongst relevant stakeholders on the funding source for enhancing the LARP program. MACHC hopes the General Assembly is able to identify an equitable funding framework that provides the necessary revenues to expand the program.

For more information call:

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