



Maryland
Hospital Association

House Bill 109 – Public Service Commission - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - Rapid Health Impact Assessment and Final Action

Position: *Support*

February 12, 2020

House Economic Matters Committee

MHA Position

Maryland's 61 nonprofit hospitals and health systems care for millions of people each year, treating 2.3 million in emergency departments and delivering more than 67,000 babies. The 108,000 people they employ are [caring for Maryland](#) around-the-clock every day—delivering leading edge, high-quality medical service and investing a combined \$1.75 billion in their communities, expanding access to housing, education, transportation, and food.

Under Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care agreement with the federal government, Maryland's hospitals are working to lower costs and improve population health. The result: hospitals are promoting the health of whole communities, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors that influence people's health.

Requiring a health impact assessment (HIA) to be completed before beginning certain construction projects would help the state meet these population health goals under the Total Cost of Care model. The HIA uses public health expertise, scientific data, and stakeholder input to determine the potential public health implications of projects outside of the health care sector, including transportation, education, land use, and social policies.

An HIA brings to light potential health effects of a proposed policy or project and offers recommendations based on risks or benefits identified. This is a valuable tool to help communities, decision makers, and practitioners make choices that improve public health through community design.ⁱ

Policy and planning decisions have significant implications for individual behaviors and public health. In the past, policies and programs that have not been recognized as having significant health consequences. Examples include housing policies that determine the quality and location of housing developments, transportation policies that affect the availability of public transportation, urban planning policies that determine land use and street connectivity, agricultural policies that influence the availability of various types of food, and economic-development policies that affect the location of businesses and industriesⁱⁱ.

Maryland's health care field believes lawmakers and policymakers should have access to this type of independent analysis about a project's potential benefit — and harm — before making a decision that could have long-term implications for people's well-being. Understanding the full

scope of a project and its anticipated impact will help to protect the health of all Marylanders and to reduce health inequities.

For example, transportation policies have the capability to either encourage or prevent healthy lifestyle choices, such as scheduling regular doctor visits, maintaining a stable job, and choosing healthy food. When health is considered a goal of transportation policy, the resulting policy can help reduce air pollution, prevent traffic injuries and deaths and lower rates of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancerⁱⁱⁱ.

An HIA is another example of Maryland's commitment to improving the lives of its citizens through policies and departmental efforts that support the prevention of disease and the promotion of wellness. One strategyⁱ to achieve this goal is integrating the concept of Health in All Policies (HiAP) into the decision-making, planning and purchasing processes across all government agencies. The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials defines HiAP "as a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policymaking across sectors, and all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people"^{iv}.

In order to bring a health and health equity lens into all policies, agencies should take into consideration the potential impact these policies have on health at the earliest stages of new projects, programs or policies. Transportation, housing, health care, employment, environmental quality, environmental hazards, working conditions, education, child care, law enforcement — all of these sectors have a role in helping Marylanders achieve and sustain healthy lifestyles. The connections of new programs or policies to health outcomes need to be explored and evaluated to avoid unintended health consequences.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report.

For more information, please contact:

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ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>

ⁱⁱ The National Academies. (2011). Improving Health in the United States: The Role of Health Impact Assessment. <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Activity%20Files/Environment/EnvironmentalHealthRT/2011-Nov-RT/132291.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Transportation Health Impact Assessment Toolkit. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/transportation/hia_toolkit.htm

^{iv} Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. Health in all Policies. <https://www.astho.org/Programs/HiAP/>