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MAYOR

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HB 109

February 13, 2020

TO: Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

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

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 109.

Growing evidence demonstrates that the social and physical environments in which we live and work play a significant role in our health and wellbeing. Researchers estimate that over 70% of health outcomes are attributable to factors beyond healthcare.¹ Social determinants of health such as housing instability, transportation barriers, food insecurity, and exposure to violence have been key drivers of chronic disease burden and premature death in Baltimore City.²

How we plan and shape our communities through the built environment – the physical parts of where we live and work – has a major impact on our health.³ A health impact assessment (HIA) is an instrument to help communities and decision-makers in private and public sectors evaluate the potential health impacts of a project or policy before implementation and make recommendations based on those findings to maximize health benefit and minimize preventable health risk.⁴ A study by PEW concluded that HIAs: 1) strengthen relationships and trust by connecting community residents to decision-makers; 2) raise the profile of public health to

¹ McGinnis et al. (2002). "The case for more active policy attention to health promotion." *Health Affairs*. Mar-Apr; 21(2): 78-93.

² "Chronic Disease Prevention." Baltimore City Health Department. Retrieved 2 February 2020.
<https://health.baltimorecity.gov/programs/health-resources-topic>

³ "Impact of the built environment on health." June 2011. National Center for Environmental Health.
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/factsheets/impactofthebuiltenvironmentonhealth.pdf>

⁴ "Health Impact Assessment". 2016. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>

decision-makers in other sectors; 3) create more equitable access to health-promoting resources (healthy food, safe places for physical activity and transit); and 4) protect vulnerable communities from disproportionate environmental risks.⁵

Calling on decision-makers in sectors beyond public health to perform a rapid HIA will allow communities and key stakeholders to promote public health in Maryland. This bill provides an avenue for decision-makers and communities to plan for better social and physical environment for residents and ultimately a better healthier future for Maryland.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 109.

⁵ “Do Health Impact Assessments Promote Healthier Decision-Making?” 2019 February 28. The Pew Charitable Trust. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2019/02/do-health-impact-assessments-promote-healthier-decision-making>