



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT FOR SB 493

Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

March 3, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons
Representation Project
Job Opportunities Task Force
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Loyola University Maryland
Maryland Catholic Conference
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Community Action
Partnership
Maryland Family Network
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Mental Health Association of
Maryland
Paul's Place
Public Justice Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore
Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports the work of the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) and urges the committee to reject the language in the BRFA that realigns funding priority for the CHRC.

The Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) funds vitally important projects that expand access to care to marginalized Marylanders. Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, the health care landscape in Maryland has dramatically changed, as almost 94% of Marylanders have health insurance coverage.¹ Nevertheless, there are still significant gaps in access to health care throughout the State. Through their grant process, the CHRC is able to fund projects that close health care gaps in underserved communities, strengthening the overall public health of the state. CHRC grants support programs that serve low-income individuals with complex health conditions, with particular emphasis on reducing health disparities and promoting health equity in the state.

MAP opposes language in the BRFA which threatens funding for the Community Health Resources Commission. CHRC is a unique funding source as it allows for innovative ideas to be funded, and without the CHRC, many revolutionary public health programs would not be realized. Since 2005, the Commission has awarded 312 grants totaling almost \$80 million to pioneering programs throughout every jurisdiction in the state. Notably, several MAP members have been beneficiaries of CHRC grants over the years, and these grants have allowed our member organizations to provide primary care to uninsured immigrants, pilot emergency department diversion programs, and support the salaries of peer recovery specialists. Reorganizing and reducing the funding for the CHRC will also reduce leveraged dollars, which ultimately eliminates the ability of community providers to fill gaps in the health care system.

As we navigate COVID-19, the work of the CHRC is even more critical. The pandemic has only exacerbated the struggles of low-income individuals and families. Predictably, the need for safety-net programs has exploded since March 2020, and has put a spotlight on the entrenched gaps, barriers, and inequities that have long existed in our programs and policies. In response to COVID, the CHRC issued its first ever emergency funding grants to provide emergency funding relief to safety-net providers. The CHRC awarded 46 grants totaling \$1.5 million in emergency funding, with a particular focus on organizations serving Black and Brown communities that have disproportionately borne the brunt of the pandemic due to systemic racism and historic disinvestment. Any reduction to the CHRC's budget would be detrimental not only to underserved communities who seek services at CHRC grantees, but also to our state's recovery from the pandemic.

MAP urges the committee to reject the BRFA action to reduce funding for the Community Health Resources Commission. Thank you for your consideration.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ US Census Bureau. 2020. American Community Survey. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2020/demo/p60-271.html>