



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Members of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

March 3, 2021

Maryland Department of Health Regulatory Commissions Budget Hearing

POSITION: LETTER OF CONCERN – MARYLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH RESOURCES COMMISSION - BUDGET

Senate President and Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee:

The Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) submits this Letter of Concern regarding a proposed permanent cut to the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission's (CHRC) budget that is contained in Senate Bill 493 - Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act. **MRHA requests that your Subcommittee reject the language in this year's BRFA and maintain the legislative mandated appropriation of the CHRC at \$8 million per year. You may recall that last year's BRFA contained identical language to reduce the CHRC's appropriation, and this language was rejected by your Subcommittee last year.**

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. MRHA is a non-profit member organization comprised of local health departments, hospitals, health centers, AHECs, non-profits, universities, community organizations, health professionals, and community members. Many of our members are past and current grant recipients and these start-up funds are extremely important to continue to support health projects in our rural communities.

The CHRC is a critical partner in providing access to care for our rural communities. CHRC has provided funding for 138 projects in every rural area of the State. These projects have served more than 120,000 Marylanders, providing access to primary care, behavioral health, and dental services. This past year, the CHRC has distributed funding to help address the impact of COVID-19 and ensure that residents in rural areas have continued access to critical health services during the pandemic.

The projects funded by the CHRC are being sustained and generating quantifiable outcomes. Many of these projects would not have begun without CHRC's initial funding of these projects. Maryland's rural communities are particularly impacted by health access challenges, including in adequate transportation, provider recruitment and retention, and maintenance of a consistent workforce, and CHRC is playing a vital role in addressing these challenges.

For these reasons, MRHA requests that your Subcommittee rejects the language in this year's BRFA (SB493) and maintains the CHRC's mandated budget at \$8 million per year, as you did last year.

Thank you again for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Lara Wilson, Executive Director, larawilson@mdruralhealth.org

cc: Members, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee