

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

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TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Antonio Hayes

FROM: Gene M. Ransom, Chief Executive Officer

DATE: January 27, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 172 – *Maryland Health Equity Resource Act*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** Senate Bill 172. Senate Bill 172 proposes the establishment of Health Equity Communities, an approach analogous to the Health Enterprise Zones initiative enacted in 2012 (*see House Bill 439: Maryland Health Improvement and Disparities Reduction Act of 2012*) to address Maryland's continuing struggle to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in many communities across the State.

Health disparities by their very nature are reflective of the deficiencies in access, delivery system responsiveness, and health outcomes specific to a given community. To appropriately address and eliminate those disparities it is essential that the solution be community specific and incorporate the collective involvement of community stakeholders – local health officials, community advocacy interests, and health care providers.

A critical component of Senate Bill 172 are the tax credits created for physicians, other health care providers and organizations located in areas designated as health equity communities. The provision of tax credits reflects a recognition that lack of adequate access to care is a critical factor in the incidence of health disparities. It has been well documented that Maryland faces significant physician shortages across the State. Those shortages are especially notable in medically underserved areas. Recruitment and retention of physicians to areas demonstrating high incidence of health disparities is essential to succeeding in their elimination. To that end, Senate Bill 172 moves the State in the appropriate direction.

Maryland can no longer afford to tolerate the inequity in health care access and health outcomes that are evident in communities across the State. MedChi looks forward to working collaboratively with the General Assembly and relevant stakeholders to enact an effective framework for addressing inequity and health disparities in Maryland.