

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 172
Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Anne Arundel County Commission for Women

January 27, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. We are writing today on behalf of the Anne Arundel County Commission for Women in support of Senate Bill 172 (SB 172). The Anne Arundel County Commission for Women was first created in 1975 and has since served as a resource and advocacy group for women in our county, with women's health one of our primary areas of focus. Health inequities are pervasive throughout Maryland, Anne Arundel County included, and we thank the Committee and the Maryland General Assembly for their consideration of this issue and legislation.

People should not have difficulty accessing primary and specialty health care because of where they live or who they are. Yet, health inequities primarily based on race, ethnicity, disability, and place of residence persist throughout the state. The global COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated and exposed these inequities.

SB 172 will help to address this problem by creating Health Equity Resource Communities. Modeled off of the successful Health Enterprise Zones that were in effect between 2012-2016, this legislation will help to focus health resources to the communities and populations that are most in need. Paid for by a one penny per dollar increase on the state's alcohol beverage sales tax, this proposal not only will help to address inequities through a dedicated funding source for the initiative, but it will also aid in reducing underage drinking and drunk driving in our state, as alcohol taxes have been proven to do.

We thank you for your consideration of this lifesaving legislation and urge a favorable report of SB 172.