



## **Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association**

To the Budget and Taxation Committee

February 24, 2021

Senate Bill 777 Public Health - Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, Senator Elfreth, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 777 Public Health - Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund.

MRHA supports this legislation that allows the Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund to distribute grants to federally qualified health centers, hospitals, and certain providers to increase access to prenatal care.

This legislation would increase access to prenatal care in rural communities that depend on quality health care services from federally qualified health centers and other community-based providers. Rural Marylanders suffer from chronic lack of care, and this increase in funding for prenatal services would greatly benefit rural communities.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

*Lara Wilson, Executive Director, [larawilson@mdruralhealth.org](mailto:larawilson@mdruralhealth.org), 410-693-6988*