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BILL NO.: **SB 172**

TITLE: Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

SPONSOR: Senator Hayes

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: January 27, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 172 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act. This legislation would establish Health Equity Resource Communities as a means of reducing health disparities, improving health outcomes, and increasing access to primary care.

Between 2012 and 2016, the Health Enterprise Zone pilot program successfully aided disadvantaged residents by providing previously resources that were previously inaccessible. This reduced disparities in healthcare and improved the quality of life for those in the program. These zones were established through an exhaustive process which identified neighborhoods with documented economic disadvantage and poor health outcomes, and sought to rectify the issue by making targeted investments in those communities.

SB 172 would make this program permanent by requiring the Secretary of Health to designate Health Equity Resource Communities across the State of Maryland, which will achieve the same lifesaving outcomes as the former Health Enterprise Zones.

COVID-19 has highlighted horrifying disparities in the distribution of and access to healthcare, but has also given a unique opportunity to identify those communities most in need of government assistance. It is the responsibility of leaders throughout the State to root out inequitable treatment faced by its residents, and this bill would be a tremendous step towards achieving that goal.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 172. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs, at cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov.