



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 2, 2021

TO: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: HB 463, Maryland Health Equity Resource Act, Support

House Bill 463 would establish a Health Equity Resource Community Advisory Committee to facilitate a program for Health Equity Resource Communities and Health Equity Research Practitioners, for the purpose of reducing health disparities, improving health outcomes and access to primary care, promoting prevention services and reducing health care costs. Health care practitioners and community health workers that practice in a Health Equity Resource Community may receive tax credits, loan repayment assistance, or may apply for grants. The bill designates a dedicated funding stream for this program: a one cent per dollar increase in the alcoholic beverage sales tax would be set aside for this purpose. Under certain circumstances a health care practitioner or a community health worker in a Health Equity Resource Community may apply for a State income tax credit.

Health inequities persist across the State and in every jurisdiction. In 2019, Montgomery County released a report detailing the health disparities faced by different demographic groups in the County. The report showed higher incidence of ER utilization, infant mortality and pre-term births, and adverse health outcomes among non-White populations groups as compared to non-Hispanic Whites. Maryland needs to direct resources to eliminating these disparities and addressing the root causes- House Bill 463 is a meaningful tool with a permanent, dedicated funding source to achieve this.

In addition to supporting the use of alcoholic beverage tax revenue to achieve the work of the Health Equity Resource Community Advisory Committee, I would also encourage the Legislature to consider the legalization and taxation of recreational cannabis as a funding source for reducing health disparities among Marylanders.

The Montgomery County Executive supports the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act and respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

cc: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee
Members of the Ways and Means Committee