



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

Support – HB463

Maryland Health Equity Resource Act
Health and Government Operations/Ways and Means Committee, February 2, 2021

Written testimony submitted by the Rev. Dr. Diane Fadely,
The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN)

... 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:40)

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland supports HB463, the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act because it is designed to address the healthcare needs of underserved communities around the State that disproportionately experience poor health outcomes. HB463 would designate selected underserved areas around the state as Health Equity Resource Communities where healthcare disparities would be reduced, access to medical care would be improved, and wellness and prevention services would be provided to reduce the incidence of disease. These goals reflect the human rights healthcare advocacy of Resolutions 2018-C041 and 2018-D014 of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed serious deficits in our health system. Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately dying from COVID and are suffering more serious illness than whites, as are other vulnerable groups such as people with low incomes, disabilities, and people living in areas with scant health services.

People in areas with insufficient healthcare services suffering from illnesses such as hypertension, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, substance abuse, and mental health disorders are at high risk for poor health outcomes. Besides improving the health and well-being of these people, implementing the measures contained in HB463 is expected to result in lower health care costs and reduced hospital admissions. The basis for a positive outcome is supported by data from a pilot program conducted between 2012-2016 that resulted in increased access to healthcare resources, improved participants' health, reduced hospitalizations, and cost effectiveness.

Funding proposed for HB463 would require raising the alcoholic beverage sales tax by one cent on the dollar. This would be the first such increase since 2011, funds well-spent to save a significant number of lives, reduce overall health care costs for underserved populations, and enable many Marylanders to enjoy improved health and more productive and fulfilled lives.

We respectfully ask you to show strong support for HB463.

