



HB463 (Cross-file SB172) – SUPPORT
House Health and Government Operations Committee

January 29, 2021 – 1:00 PM

(HB463) The Prince George's Healthcare Alliance, Inc. supports the creation of Health Equity Resource Communities in the state to provide critical services to underserved populations and other financial incentives to address poor health outcomes that contribute to inequities by race, ethnicity, disability, and geographic location.

This initiative is based on a 2012-2016 Health Enterprise Zone (HEZ) pilot in Prince George's County, and we had the honor of participating in the development and implementation of the new HEZ system of care model that successfully increased access to health resources, improved residents' health, reduced hospital admissions, and created cost savings. All Marylanders deserve access to high-quality, affordable health care and health inequities based on race, ethnicity, disability and place of residence persist throughout the state. In underserved areas of the state, people with chronic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and substance and mental health disorders have worse health outcomes and are less able to get the care and treatment they need. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed these health inequities and highlighted the need to address them and otherwise improve health outcomes in our state.

Supporting health and reducing preventable hospital admissions will result in lower overall health care costs, including lower insurance premiums for everyone. Because this initiative is based on a 2012-2016 Health Enterprise Zone (HEZ), we at the Healthcare Alliance participated firsthand with the Prince George's County Health Department and were witness to its success in the community of Capitol Heights, Maryland. This diverse community of approximately 40,000 residents, at the time of the pilot, was particularly challenged by a lack of primary care physicians, multiple health care and social needs, poor health outcomes and members from this community represented 80% of the hospital readmission rates at Prince George's Hospital Center.

The Prince George's County HEZ focused on:

- High risk patients in poor control of their chronic illness
- High risk patients needing connections to family and social services
- High risk patients with unmet behavioral health needs
- Patients with no Primary Care Physician or no visit to their physician in over 12 months to address preventive care
- Patients with no health insurance
- High risk patients with a hospital readmission within 30-days for the same condition
- Patients with multiple ED visits



- Patients with multiple 9-1-1 calls for non-emergent reasons

Providing resources to assist patients with transitioning from hospital to home, identifying and addressing social determinants of health such as social support, food insecurity, transportation and connections to primary care medical homes, coupled with expanding access to care by opening doctor's offices in underserved communities is a proven model of effectiveness and successful outcomes.

Funds from Health Department's HEZ Grant addressed the lack of primary care doctors by funding the expansion of one office and the opening of 4 new doctor's offices in the community to expand access to care in zip code 20743. In one year, the new HEZ offices provided a total of 58,451 appointments and 41,614 county residents were seen. By expanding access to care in underserved communities, the HEZ created 18.9 new jobs in this community alone, including new doctors, nurses, social workers and community health workers.

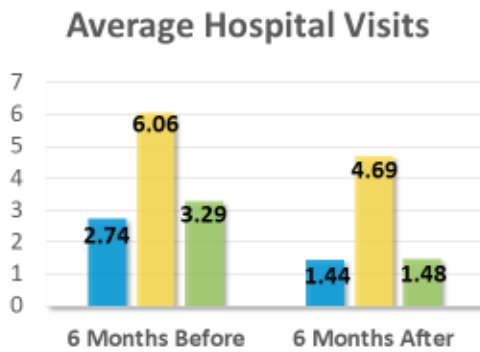
The HEZ plan was created in collaboration with elected officials, civic associations, faith based leaders, and residents in health, and also focused on improving Health Literacy by conducting Health Forums in the Community to teach residents how to communicate with health care providers, prepare for doctor's visits, and ask important questions with confidence.

The following chart shows the cost savings realized by the Prince George's County HEZ for patient utilization 6 months prior to enrollment in the pilot compared to their utilization patterns 6 months after program enrollment. The HEZ pilot demonstrated that an creating an effective value-based system of care in a significantly underserved zip code (20743), expanding access to care, addressing social determinants of health and enhancing health literacy in the community reduces costs. Hospital visits were reduced by as much as 42%, and hospital costs reduced by as much as 54%.



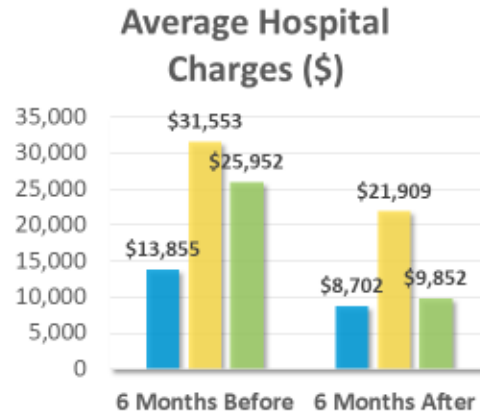
2015 – June 2016 HEZ Hospital Use Analysis

N = 143 patients managed over an 18 month period



■ Graduated ■ Ongoing ■ Non-compliant

47.4% **22.6%** **55%**
Reduction in Visits



■ Graduated ■ Ongoing ■ Non-compliant

37.2% **30.6%** **62%**
Reduction in Cost



Therefore, The Prince George's Healthcare Alliance, Inc. respectfully urges a favorable report of HB463.