



## TESTIMONY FOR HB0463

### MARYLAND HEALTH EQUITY RESOURCE ACT

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Barron

**Committee:** Health and Government Operations

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0463 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our Coalition members come from all over the state and one thing that we all have come to appreciate by getting to know one another is how very disparate our communities are. Some are very wealthy and have access to a variety of services, while some are just struggling with the basics.

We use the term underserved to talk about communities that do not have access to the same services than others. In these communities, the inequities are staggering. Nowhere more obviously than in the area of health.

In underserved communities, access to basic health care (primary care, dental care, and vision care) is lacking and health outcomes are very poor. We have seen this play out on a horrific scale with the pandemic. People in underserved communities got sicker in higher numbers and died in higher numbers. We must find a way to even out the access to quality health care for all of our communities. It will literally save lives.

This bill aims to finally make an official identification of these underserved areas and make them Health Equity Resource Communities. By doing this, they will get the help they need to compete for grants and other financial resources to provide the services that are lacking. We believe this idea has tremendous promise for those underserved communities.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.