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January 27, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Senate Budget and Tax Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 172 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act – SUPPORT w/Amendment

Dear Chair Guzzone,

The American Physical Therapy Association Maryland is writing to register our strong support of Senate Bill 172.

APTA Maryland represents over 1,900 physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in the State. Physical therapists provide essential services in today's health care delivery system. This includes but is not limited to addressing chronic and acute pain through non-pharmacological methods decreasing the reliance on opioid medications; improving recovery times that reduces reoccurrence of injury and disease, and ultimately hospital readmissions; and developing and managing essential rehabilitation programs for survivors of COVID-19. PTs work to improve outcomes which lead to long-term cost savings.

Senate Bill 172 requires the Secretary of Health to designate certain areas as Health Equity Resource Communities in a certain manner; specifying that the purpose of establishing Health Equity Resource Communities is to reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes, improve access to primary care, promote primary and secondary prevention services, and reduce health care costs and hospital admissions and readmissions.

This is an important and timely bill as the Covid-19 Pandemic has greatly exposed the extent of health disparities and inequities in Maryland and across the country. This bill represents a significant commitment of resources to find ways to remove barriers and work toward the equity that is needed in our healthcare system.

To that end we respectfully request a friendly amendment to include physical therapists on the work of the Advisory Committee.

Proposed Amendment:

On Page 7 after line 13, Insert:

ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS;

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a need for patients, health systems, payers, and providers to pivot and rapidly adopt or expand models and modes of care delivery that minimize disruptions in care and the risks associated with those disruptions. Physical therapists are committed to bringing value to our communities, hospital systems, and patients as we weather this pandemic and beyond.

For the reasons noted above we ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 172 and favorable consideration of our amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin C. Platt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K" and "P".

Kevin Platt, PT, DPT, MBA
President, APTA Maryland