



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

POSITION STATEMENT

HB 463

Delegate Erek Barron
(HGO Committee)

Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

POSITION:

SUPPORT

HB 463 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act – This bill would require the Secretary for the Maryland Department of Health to designate Health Equity Resource Communities (HERC) to oversee the targeting of State resources to five (5) specific areas: reducing health disparities; improving health outcomes; improving access to primary care; promoting primary and secondary prevention services and; reducing health care costs, hospital admissions and readmissions. This bill would also require the establishment of an Advisory Committee to provide guidance to the Secretary on the eligibility criteria, monitoring and reporting on the designated communities.

The legislation would create a Health Equity Resource Community Reserve Fund that will support designated areas by providing grants or tax credits and providing funding the to Department to supplement existing funding for behavioral health programs. This Act will be funded through revenues generated by an increase in the sales and use tax rate on the sales of alcoholic beverages by off-sale and on-sale retailers after October 1, 2021. Ten percent (10%) of the revenues generated by these additional charges will be credited to the Fund.

In 2018, the Prince George's County Council hired the Rand Corporation to assess the health of County residents and develop strategies to address the disparities. Prince George's County's challenges include extremely high rates of: emergency room visits by adults with chronic conditions; 9-1-1 calls for non-urgent medical needs, and; inpatient hospitalizations for behavioral health conditions. The consultant's study provided recommendations on: creating accountability across County agencies on how health will be integrated into policy design and development; improving the coordination, accessibility, clarity, usability and delivery of health services; greater attention to how agencies beyond Health, Family Services, and Social Services are contributing to health outcomes, and; breaking down the silos between health and human services funding streams to better leverage and coordinate resources. HB 463 will address many of the recommendations contained in the consultant's report. The Council wants to ensure that our federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), which are underfunded and struggling, are eligible to benefit from the resources provided by this legislation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Prince George's County Council **SUPPORTS HB 463** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of its position.

Prepared by: Carrington & Associates
On behalf of Prince George's County Council

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