



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 28 - Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

SPONSOR: Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: January 26, 2021

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 28 - Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities** which requires health care providers applying for a license renewal to complete an implicit bias training program. The bill also directs the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities to publish on its website health data including race and ethnicity to be updated at least every six months and mandates an annual appropriation for the Office that is the greater of \$1,788,314 or 1.2% of the total funds appropriated by the Maryland Department of Health.

Implicit biases are beliefs that can affect behavior, even when individuals are not aware that they hold these beliefs.¹ Evidence shows that implicit bias impedes successful communication between patients and their health care providers.² This results in interactions where a patient of colors sees a doctor with implicit bias, and afterwards the patient feels that the doctor does not care about them and that the treatment they've been prescribed may not work.³

We can see the negative effects that stem from implicit biases when comparing maternal and infant health, where they have been identified as a contributing

¹ Project Implicit, "Frequently Asked Questions," <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html> (last visited Feb. 25, 2020).

² Howell EA. Reducing Disparities in Severe Maternal Morbidity and Mortality. *Clin Obstet Gynecol.* 2018;61(2):387–399. doi:10.1097/GRF.0000000000000349.

³ Bendix J. How Implicit Bias Harms Patient Care. *Medical Economics Journal.* December 10, 2019; 96(23). <https://www.medicaleconomics.com/view/how-implicit-bias-harms-patient-care> (last visited Jan. 22, 2021).

factor in persistent disparities in United States birth outcomes.⁴ Nationally, black women are four times more likely to die during or after pregnancy than their white counterparts.⁵ In Prince George's County, black women are more likely to have preterm and low birth weight infants compared to other races and ethnicities.⁶ The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention both recommend implicit bias training to reduce disparities in birth outcomes.⁷ Requiring implicit bias training is an important first step in addressing this problem.

For these reasons, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 28** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

⁴ See Howell, *supra* note 2.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Christina Gray & Donna Perkins, Office of Assessment and Planning, Prince George's County Health Dept., 2019 Maternal and Infant Health Report, <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/3107>.

⁷ See The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, *supra* note 2; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *supra* note 3.