



TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Ereik L. Barron

FROM: Nora Hoban, Chief Executive Officer
Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers
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DATE: February 2, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT CONCEPT** – House Bill 463 – *Maryland Health Equity Resource Act*

The Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC) is the federally designated Primary Care Association for Delaware and Maryland Community Health Centers. As the backbone of the primary care safety net, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) are united by a shared mission to ensure access to high-quality health care to all individuals, regardless of ability to pay. FQHCs are non-profit organizations providing comprehensive primary care to the medically underserved and uninsured. MACHC supports its members in the delivery of accessible, affordable, cost effective, and quality primary health care to those most in need. To this end, MACHC **supports the concept** of House Bill 463.

House Bill 463 proposes to establish a framework for the establishment of Health Equity Communities in areas of the State with demonstrated health inequities and disparities. Mirroring the framework of the Health Equity Zones program that sunset in 2017, funding provided through this legislation is designed to implement innovative strategies for addressing health disparities in communities with the highest health disparities.

FQHCs are a critical component of the safety-net provided to Marylanders and are excited about the potential opportunity to play a critical role in advancing the objectives of this legislation. FQHC's federal designation requires them to be located in medically underserved areas, the very areas where Maryland's health disparities are most significant. Maryland's FQHCs provide services to more than 340,000 Marylanders annually at 129 locations throughout the State. They serve 1 in 18 Maryland residents providing more than 1.5 million visits annually. Furthermore, FQHC's federal designation requires them to provide health care services to all residents regardless of patients' ability to pay, including Maryland's immigrant population. To that end, as the committee works with relevant stakeholders to craft the final framework to advance this legislation, **MACHC requests consideration be given to providing FQHCs a more definitive role in framing the program and specific designation as an entity that will be entitled to receive funding through this initiative.**

Reducing health disparities is a priority for MACHC and its members. House Bill 463 provides an opportunity to significantly address disparities in communities across the State. MACHC looks forward to working with all affected stakeholders to move this initiative forward. To share more about community health centers, please see below and more information can be found at www.machc.com.

What Are Community Health Centers?



Community Health Centers – also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) – offer comprehensive, quality primary medical, behavioral, and dental health care. FQHCs deliver care to the most vulnerable, including the homeless, agricultural workers, public housing residents, and veterans.



F

Fees based on ability to pay

Care for patients regardless of ability to pay and charge for services based on sliding fee scale



Q

Quality primary health care open to all

Deliver culturally-competent comprehensive primary care, health education, and translation and social services



H

Highly competent professional team

Integrate care tailored to unique needs of diverse medically underserved populations



C

Consumer/community control

Operate under community-based board of directors composed mostly of patients



Maryland Community Health Centers By The Numbers



Serve **342,565** Marylanders annually at **129 sites**

Serve **1 in 18** Marylanders

Provide more than **1.5 million** visits annually

Contribute **\$785.6 million** to economy

Provide more than **3,000 jobs** in Maryland

Patients with a community health center as their medical home, save the healthcare system an average of \$1,263 per year translating into more than **\$432 million** in savings

Why Community Health Centers?



Comprehensive services

Trusted providers

Positive outcomes

Boards comprised of patients

Responsive to community needs

Cost-efficient & high-quality care

True to mission caring for most vulnerable

A constant during periods of being uninsured

