



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 9, 2021

House Bill 552 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Emergency Service Transporters - Reimbursement

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Hornberger, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 552 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Emergency Service Transporters - Reimbursement.

MRHA supports this legislation that requires the Maryland Department of Health to increase the amount of certain reimbursement for emergency service transporters by \$25 each fiscal year, beginning in fiscal year 2022, until the rate is at least \$300.

Rural Marylanders suffer from lack of access to emergency transportation, and quality and equitable transportation in general, so this increased reimbursement would provide incentive to increased access to these services across rural Maryland.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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