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January 28, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD

Support for HB463/SB172 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

Allergy & Asthma Network, a national nonprofit dedicated to protecting and improving the health of people with allergies, asthma and related conditions, supports HB463/SB172, which would create much needed Health Equity Resource Communities in the state of Maryland. People should not have difficulty accessing primary and specialty health care because of where they live or who they are. Inequities by race, ethnicity, disability, and geography will also be addressed and help ensure that every Marylander has access to the healthcare they deserve.

A critical piece of HB463/SB172 is the proposed one penny per dollar increase in the state alcohol sales tax which would fund the Health Equity Resource Communities. To succeed, this program must have a permanent and dedicated funding source. In addition, alcohol tax increases are proven to save lives by reducing underage drinking and drunk driving. And, the legislation recognizes the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry by delaying the impact of the tax on alcohol consumed in bars and restaurants for two years. Please help make Maryland a healthier and fairer state for all our people by helping to enact HB463/SB172.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me or our Director of Advocacy and Maryland resident Charmayne Anderson at 800-878-4403. Learn more about the Network at AllergyAsthmaNetwork.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tonya A. Winders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tonya Winders
President and CEO

cc: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee