



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Senate Finance Committee

February 4, 2022

Senate Bill 295 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Emergency Service Transporters - Reimbursement

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman, Senator Beidle, and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 295- 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 2023, 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. We are particularly supportive of this bill's inclusion of mobile integrated healthcare such as that modeled on Maryland's Eastern Shore and would urge that this element be included in the final version should this proposal be enacted.

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.

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

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