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SB607 Health Equity Resource Communities – Modifications
FAVORABLE
Senate Finance Committee
February 22, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Karen Kalla, member of the AARP Maryland Executive Council and resident of Anne Arundel County. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in Maryland, encompassing more than 850,000 members. AARP Maryland is proud to support SB607. We thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. We also thank Senators Hayes, Feldman, Guzzone, Griffith, and Kelley for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

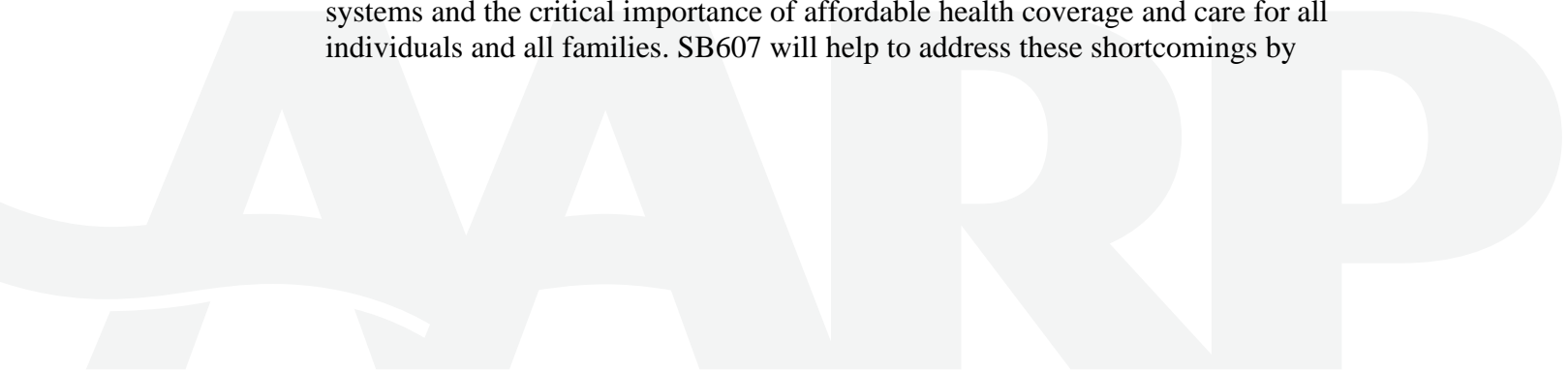
AARP is a non-partisan, non-profit nationwide organization that strengthens communities and advocates on those issues that most matter to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

We are pleased to support Senate Bill 607 that would expand the scope of the Health Equity Resource Communities Reserve Fund to include two staff positions and technical support from CRISP (Chesapeake Regional Information System).

Last year, AARP Maryland supported the establishment of the Maryland Commission on Health Equity and this year we continue to advocate for the state to provide the resources necessary for the Commission and Health Equity Communities to succeed in their mission.

In countries like the U.S. where inequality is the most extreme, we see higher rates of obesity, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease, especially for people over 50 and across all income levels. We know that by closing these gaps in health alone, we could add trillions of dollars of GDP in the coming years, not to mention creating longer, happier, and more productive lives for millions of people.

The Coronavirus pandemic has exposed the vast shortcomings within our health systems and the critical importance of affordable health coverage and care for all individuals and all families. SB607 will help to address these shortcomings by



providing a coordinated collection of key impactful resources designed to gain a better understanding of the issues and what Marylanders of color face regarding health disparities. Technical support will help to identify the needs and coordinate the responses. Staff are necessary to manage the outreach and ensure that those needing these health services receive the necessary supports.

The well-being of all Maryland communities is a top priority. The resources outlined in SB607 will contribute greatly to this goal by focusing on the good health and well-being of those living in underserved communities. We appreciate your efforts to support Maryland's Health Equity Communities—and the outcome of a better quality of life for all Marylander's.

For these reasons, AARP supports SB607. For questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan tbresnahan@arp.org or by calling 410.302.8451.