



ST. MARY'S COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Letter of Support for House Bill 906: Health Equity Resources Communities - Modifications

Meenakshi G. Brewster, MD, MPH, FAAFP
St. Mary's County Health Officer
On behalf of St. Mary's County Health Department
21580 Peabody Street, Leonardtown MD 20650

Dear Respected Committee Members: Health and Governmental Operations

This written testimony is in support of House Bill 906: Health Equity Resources Communities - Modifications (HB 906).

Recently, St. Mary's County was selected by the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) for Pathways funding intended to reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes, and reduce avoidable hospitalizations. This funding will help establish primary care and behavioral health stabilization services for areas of great need. Our county will use these funds for capacity-building over two years as we prepare to become a Health Equity Resource Community. The extended timeframe and CHRC staffing technical assistance that HB 906 proposes will be very important to the success of our efforts locally.

Our local efforts will target the communities of Lexington Park, Great Mills, and Park Hall. The involved zip codes reflect the most significant health disparities in our county, including worse outcomes and higher emergency department utilization for a variety of chronic conditions and behavioral health, higher percentages of those living in poverty, higher percentages of those unemployed, higher percentages of minority residents and persons with disabilities, and lower access to personal transportation. They are federally-designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area for **both** mental health and primary care. Our initiative will establish behavioral health crisis stabilization services, a primary care services access point, medical respite care for the homeless, and a variety of efforts to address social determinants of health.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 906 and the incredible value it holds to many Maryland communities, including those in St. Mary's County. We urge a favorable report for HB 906.

Sincerely,

Meenakshi G. Brewster, MD, MPH, FAAFP
St. Mary's County Health Officer