



STATE OF MARYLAND

Community Health Resources Commission

45 Calvert Street, Room 336 • Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Edward J. Kasemeyer, Chair – Mark Luckner, Executive Director

March 25, 2022

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 607 – Health Equity Resource Communities – Modifications

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

The Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) is pleased to submit this Letter of Support for SB 607 – Health Equity Resource Communities – Modifications. As you know, SB 607 would make a few modest program adjustments as the CHRC continues to implement the new five-year program created in the “Maryland Health Equity Resource Act” (Chap. 742, 2021) enacted by the Maryland General Assembly last year. The CHRC strongly supports SB 607.

As you recall, the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act provides significant new resources to be administered by the CHRC to reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes, and reduce avoidable hospitalizations. The Act establishes the “Pathways to Health Equity” Fund, to support two-year programs to reduce health disparities and help lay the groundwork for future “Health Equity Resource Communities” (HERCs). The Act also establishes a second fund, “The Health Equity Resource Community” fund, to support projects in the out-years of the program. After the execution of the two-year Pathways grants, the CHRC is directed to issue a second Call for Proposals to establish new “Health Equity Resource Communities” (HERCs).

On February 15, 2022, the CHRC Commissioners voted to award nine new grant awards under the Pathways to Health Equity program to support new programs across the state in urban, rural, and suburban areas across the state (attached is a summary of these new programs). Under the Act, these projects are two-year projects that are designed to help lay the groundwork for future HERCs. These Pathways projects will begin implementation this spring and are expected to conclude in the spring of 2024. SB 906 would change the release date of the HERC Call for Proposals from October 2022 to October 2023, which would enable the nine new Pathways grantees additional time to implement their two-year programs, collect and report outcome data, and respond to the second HERC RFP. In addition, HB 906 would enable the CHRC to utilize the new HERC Fund to cover the CHRC’s staffing costs (included

in the Governor's budget for FY 2023) and the costs of a contract with Chesapeake Regional Information Systems for our Patients (CRISP).

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully request a favorable report of SB 607 from the Health & Government Operations Committee, and we look forward to working with you and Members of the Maryland General Assembly as the CHRC continues to implement the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Luckner', written in a cursive style.

Mark Luckner,
Executive Director

CC: The Honorable Edward J. Kasemeyer, CHRC Chair
Members, House Health & Government Operations Committee