



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 4, 2022

House Bill 286 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Emergency Service Transporters - Reimbursement

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Kaiser, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 286 Emergency Medical Services- Paramedics- Immunization- Effective Date.

MRHA supports this legislation that delays the effective date to January 1, 2026, of certain provisions of law that repeal the authority of paramedics to administer influenza and covid immunizations under certain circumstances.

According to the state's COVID-19 dashboard, vaccination rates in rural Maryland are lower than the statewide average while the burden of the disease as measured by positivity and hospitalization and death rates are higher than the statewide average. All efforts that increase access to vaccination in rural Maryland will support the full state's response to this pandemic.

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.

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

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