



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 28, 2023

To: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Support - House Bill 596 - Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 596.

Access to reliable transportation is a common barrier to medical care. In Community Health Needs Assessments across the state, transportation is often identified as a top challenge. It can also contribute to longer hospital stays if a patient does not have access to transportation to their next level of care. Marylanders in rural and underserved urban areas with limited transportation have even greater difficulties getting to and from medical appointments.

This statewide challenge contributes to longer emergency department wait times in two ways: patients may wait for transportation out of the hospital, and patients unable to be discharged from an inpatient bed can cause hospital throughput issues. Additionally, lack of available nonemergency transport options means patients cannot get to critical appointments. This can delay care and lead to avoidable hospital visits and costly emergency ambulance transport.

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) funds the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program, which is administered by local jurisdictions and available only to Medicaid participants. There are significant programmatic limitations, and different requirements across counties and restrictions by vendor availability, distance, and hours of operation. While helpful, they are insufficient to address the scope of medical transportation needs for all Marylanders.

HB 596 will offer patients and hospitals another tool to help get patients home or to the next level of care as soon as they are cleared to do so. Hospitals are well-positioned to help coordinate transportation and work with community stakeholders to implement these programs and address this critical social determinant of health.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 596.

For more information, please contact:  
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