



**Date: February 23, 2024**

To: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Education, the Environment and Transportation Committee

Reference: House Bill 891-Seed Community Development Anchor Institution Fund-Alterations

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members,

On behalf of LifeBridge Health, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments and urge your favorable support on House Bill 891. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County; Grace Medical Center (formerly Bon Secours Hospital), a freestanding medical facility in West Baltimore; and Center for Hope a center of excellence focused on provided hope and services for trauma survivors in Baltimore City.

Health care facilities serve as anchor institutions for which the Seed program requires to support community revitalization and development. Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, near Pimlico Racecourse, has facilitated capital improvements along the nearby east-west Belvedere Avenue corridor, bordering our facility and the track. Northwest Hospital invested in improvements along Old Court and Liberty Roads, partnering with Baltimore County and the State to enhance streetscaping. Carroll Hospital, invested in rural enhancements for walkability with sidewalks and walking paths to bring activity and needed revitalization for safe, healthy outdoor access.

Seed funding is an important tool to support the many community organizations working in partnership with our hospitals to support the residents in the communities we jointly serve. In the past funding cycle, we were unable to partner with at least three organizations who did not meet the matching fund requirements that are currently in the policy. These organizations are addressing many of the social determinants of health such as housing and food access that allow our residents to thrive. Removal of the need for matching funds through private sources would provide equitable access to smaller and minority led organizations who historically have not had access to private philanthropy and afford them more opportunities to support the communities in which they are so deeply entrenched.

Other examples that demonstrate the value of SEED funding include, LifeBridge funding to support Bon Secours Community Works, our housing partner near Grace Medical Center, to renovate vacant rowhomes that will be available for homeownership for residents with 60% AMI. Sinai Hospital recently opened the Center for Hope, our comprehensive violence intervention and prevention center of excellence, on our parcel adjacent to Pimlico Racecourse. The Center for Hope tackles the entrenched violence issues plaguing our communities, and while the therapeutic and medical services provided to victims of trauma are the key focus of the Center, violence intervention and prevention activity will positively impact community and economic development by enhancing public safety.

**CARE BRAVELY**

The Center received Seed funds and epitomizes the type of development Seed is intended to drive. Our improvements, along with City and State investments, further catalyze redevelopment in our nearby communities - indeed, the essence of the Seed Fund.

Hospital Anchor Role: Seed builds on anchors' relationship with their nearby communities. Hospitals operating under a global budget as part of the Maryland All-Payor system address social determinants of health – good schools, safe neighborhoods, effective transportation, decent housing, and a green, healthy environment, among others. These factors impact our communities' health, and under a population health model, fit squarely into our objectives. Broader access to the Seed Community Anchor Institution Fund is critical to the projects that will greatly enhance our communities and the health of our residents.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a Favorable report on HB891.

For more information, please contact:

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