



TO: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: January 26, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 78 – *Public Health – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021)*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Maryland Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 78.

It is well recognized that racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of their social determinants of health, including access to health care, education, employment, economic stability, housing, public safety, and neighborhood and environmental factors. A broad body of research has quantified the existence of health disparities including a greater risk of heart disease, stroke, infant mortality, maternal mortality, lower birth weight, obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cancers, respiratory diseases, and autoimmune diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these health disparities. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has noted that achieving health equity, eliminating health disparities, and improving health in the United States are overarching goals to improve and protect our nation’s health.

House bill 78 creates a *Maryland Commission on Health Equity* that is charged with developing a “health equity framework” to examine ways for state and local government agencies to collaborate to implement policies that will positively impact the health of residents of the state. The Commission is to assess the impact of a comprehensive list of factors on the health of residents including but not limited to access to safe and affordable housing, educational attainment, opportunities for employment, economic stability, access to transportation, and social justice. The legislation defines a “health equity framework” as a public health framework through which policymakers and stakeholders in the public and private sectors use a collaborative approach to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities in the state by incorporating health considerations into decision making across all sectors and policy areas.

If the State is to comprehensively address health disparities and health equity, it must address systemic issues beyond just the health care sector. Passage of House Bill 78 will create a framework for addressing systemic inequities across all State and local agencies. A favorable report is requested.

**For more information call:**

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