



House Bill 463

Maryland Health Equity Resource Act

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations and
Ways and Means Committees

Date: February 2, 2021

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 463. This bill would establish a statewide framework to target health inequities and promote better health service and offerings in underserved areas of our state.

Maryland, like many states, faces a worrisome gap in health outcomes based on demography and geography. A multi-tiered approach to help better identify communities and neighborhoods of concern, and to promote greater access and quality care, should be a priority in addressing and confronting this insidious health problem.

HB 463 sets forth just such a plan. Identifying communities of concern and need – in the bill “Health Equity Resource Communities” – is a critical step toward better serving those areas. The model in HB 463 has a structural parallel to Maryland’s Enterprise Zone program, but rather than targeting economic distress, it targets health disparities. Creating incentives for health care practitioners to locate in these areas, and hopefully embed into these communities, provides hope for a turnaround in the health outcomes gap.

County governments, and local health departments, are among the substantial list of stakeholders in the processes envisioned under the bill, but its long-term oversight and success will depend on that wide range of contributors to remain committed to these difficult tasks. Counties are eager to play their role in moving forward and bridging the gap in health care access and outcomes for all our residents.

HB 463 creates a new framework to identify, isolate, and combat health inequities. MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 463 to advance more equitable health services and outcomes across our state.