



MARYLAND
Association of
COUNTIES

House Bill 1685

Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination Services Grant Program Fund (Thrive by Three Fund)

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health & Government Operations Committee

Date: March 20, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1685 as a new state commitment to counties assisting vulnerable families.

HB 1685 establishes a grant fund to help counties and municipalities provide care coordination, intervention, and services to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and children from birth to 3 years old. Priority for grant funding is given to jurisdictions with high rates of infant mortality or pre-term births, and high rates of women enrolled in Medicaid.

The grant program helps local governments and their community-based partners to spearhead comprehensive, collaborative programs designed to address women's pre- and postnatal health and their child's development. Strong families are a bedrock for strong communities. A holistic approach to supporting children and their mothers can yield overwhelming results for the long-term well-being of counties and their communities.

For instance, coordination of programs can help ensure that babies can grow into children that will enter the school system physically and mentally healthy and ready to learn. Together, these programs can also help eligible women to improve their maternal health and build life skills to achieve some economic independence.

Counties have a vested public health interest in reducing health disparities and improving the well-being of women and children. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1685.