



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 5

Public Health-Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

Senate Finance Committee
February 2, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons
Representation Project
Job Opportunities Task Force
League of Women Voters of Maryland
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Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Community Action
Partnership
Maryland Family Network
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
Public Justice Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore
Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports Senate Bill 5. There are significant racial disparities in birth outcomes for Black women and Black babies. Black women in Maryland are 4 times more likely to die after childbirth than White women. According to the State's Maternal Mortality Review Program, "compared to 2008- 2012, the 2013-2017 White MMR in Maryland decreased 35.4 percent and the Black MMR increased 11.9 percent, increasing the racial difference. The 2013-2017 Black MMR is 4 times the White MMR."

The racial disparities in birth outcomes for Black individuals cannot be explained by biological differences, socio-economic status, or even education level. Rather, Black patients are treated differently by medical providers than White patients. We know it is critical that medical providers serving pregnant individuals receive training on implicit bias to reduce this bias and eliminate the racial disparities in birth outcomes for Black pregnant individuals and their babies. SB 5 expands upon HB 837 which passed in the 2020 Legislative Session and requires implicit bias training for all health care practitioners and to see that training become a requirement for the recertification of their medical license. While we recognize that training on implicit bias alone is not enough to eliminate bias by medical providers and eliminating racial bias by medical providers alone will not eliminate racial disparities in health outcomes, we applaud the steps forward SB 5 takes towards that goal.

The only way to eliminate racial disparities in health outcomes is to collect health data that is disaggregated by race and ethnicity and study the root causes of those disparities. We applaud SB 5's requirement that Maryland's Department of Health publish and update bi-annually health data disaggregated by race and ethnicity on their Health Equity Data page. Finally, SB 5's inclusion of a budget appropriation and the requirement to seek additional funding ensures that the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities has the resources it needs to robustly address racial disparities in health outcomes across Maryland.

MAP appreciates your consideration and we strongly urge a favorable report on SB 5 so we can more effectively eliminate racial disparities in health outcomes.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.