



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East  
Annapolis, MD 21041

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 977: Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Funding for Small Business Insurance Subsidies and Outreach

Dear Chair Kelley,

I commend Senator Hester for introducing Senate Bill 977, which would require the Governor to appropriate \$17 million to the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) and Small Business Health Options Program subsidies beginning in FY 2022.

Howard County is proud to be ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* among the top-ten healthiest counties in our nation. I support state-level efforts that promote the health and well-being of our residents and employees, not only in Howard County but across the state.

During open enrollment, 155,318 Marylanders enrolled in an MHBE qualified health plan, including 9,254 residents in Howard County. Senate Bill 977's annual appropriation of \$17 million would fund SHOP subsidies and outreach opportunities that could help reduce the costs of purchasing health insurance plans for roughly 75 percent of Howard County's 7,448 businesses with fewer than 20 employees.

Although Howard County has higher levels of health care coverage, we will continue to promote initiatives at the state and county level that can advance opportunities and increased access to health care in all jurisdictions.

The dedicated support from SB 977 directed towards our state's small businesses can complement former efforts, such as Howard County's *Healthy Howard* health care program. Healthy Howard supports 13,806 Howard County residents under 65 living without insurance and an additional 6,195 residents that are eligible for free or low-cost coverage.

By partnering together, government and private sector stakeholders can continue to help our State's residents and small business employees receive the medical care they need to take care of themselves and their families.

I urge a favorable report on SB 977.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive