



Maryland
Hospital Association

**HB 308 – Public Service Commission – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity –
Rapid Health Impact Assessment and Final Action**

Position: *Support*

Bill Summary

Requiring an applicant for a certificate of public convenience and necessity for certain construction to conduct a rapid health impact assessment (HIA) on the project and report on its findings; requiring a rapid HIA report to be completed not later than 45 days after the applicant submits its application to the Public Service Commission; requiring an applicant to complete the rapid HIA in a certain manner; requiring the rapid HIA report to be considered part of a certain application; etc.

MHA Position

Under Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care agreement with the federal government, Maryland's hospitals are working to lower costs and improve population health. In addition to treating illness and injury, hospitals are reaching out beyond their four walls to keep people well and improve the health of the communities they serve. The result: hospitals are taking care of the whole person, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors that influence people's health.

Requiring a health impact assessment (HIA) to be completed before beginning certain construction projects would go a long way toward helping the state meet these goals. The HIA uses public health expertise, scientific data, and stakeholder input to determine the potential public health implications of projects outside of the health care sector, including transportation, education, land use, and social policies.

An HIA brings to light potential health effects of a proposed policy or project and offers recommendations based on risks or benefits identified. This is a valuable tool to help communities, decision makers, and practitioners make choices that improve public health through community design.¹

Maryland's health care field believes lawmakers and policymakers should have access to this type of independent analysis about a project's potential benefit — and harm — before making a decision that could have long-term implications for people's well-being. Understanding the full scope of a project and its anticipated impact will help to protect the health of all Marylanders and to reduce health inequities.

An HIA is another example of Maryland's commitment to improving the lives of its citizens through policies and departmental efforts that support the prevention of disease and the

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>

promotion of wellness. One strategy that has been identified to achieve this goal is integrating the concept of Health in All Policies (HiAP) into the decision-making, planning and purchasing processes across all sectors of the government. The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) defines HiAP “as a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policymaking across sectors, and all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people.

In order to bring a health and health equity lens into all policies, agencies must require that a consideration of health impacts be brought into the earliest stages of new project, program or policy formulation. Transportation, housing, health care, employment, environmental quality, environmental hazards, working conditions, education, child care, law enforcement — all of these sectors and others have a role in creating the conditions that enable all people and communities to achieve and sustain good health. The connections of new programs or policies to health outcomes need to be explored and evaluated to avoid unintended health consequences.

Given that HB 308 seeks to improve the health of all Marylanders and address health inequities, we respectfully urge a *favorable report*.