



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 6, 2024

To: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, House Health & Government Operations
Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 119- Giving Infants a Future Without Transmission (GIFT)
Act

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 119.

Undiagnosed and untreated HIV and syphilis infections in pregnant women increase the risk of perinatal HIV transmission, stillbirth or premature births, and infant mortality. Although Maryland law requires HIV testing to be offered during both the first and third trimesters, late or no initiation of prenatal care and HIV antiretroviral therapy was a leading factor behind a rise in perinatal HIV infections in Maryland in 2022.¹ Meanwhile congenital syphilis infections rose by an alarming 102% in the state between 2016 and 2020.²

HB 119 recognizes the critical need to not delay diagnoses or miss opportunities to intervene. The bill would help strengthen HIV and syphilis screening and reporting requirements, which are essential to ensure pregnant people and infants receive the care and support they need and in a timely manner.

This bill will help reduce maternal and infant mortality risk and promote the health of mothers and babies.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 119.

For more information, please contact:
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¹ Maryland Department of Health. https://www.mbp.state.md.us/forms/Clinician_letter_HIV_02172023.pdf

² CDC: Spotlight on Sexually Transmitted Infections & Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/sti-funding-at-work/jurisdictional-spotlights/maryland.pdf>