

HOUSE BILL 1617

J1, L2

6lr1146

By: **Delegates Alston, Coley, Harrison, Ivey, Roberson, Roberts, Taylor, and Toles**
Introduced and read first time: February 19, 2026
Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Health – Health Innovation Zones – Establishment**

3 FOR the purpose of authorizing the local zoning authority in a county to designate a health
4 innovation zone if an area meets certain criteria; requiring a county, if the local
5 zoning authority designates a health innovation zone, to establish, by law, certain
6 incentives; requiring the Prince George’s County Council to designate a health
7 innovation zone in certain areas; authorizing the Prince George’s County Council to
8 designate additional health innovation zones in certain areas; requiring the
9 Governor to include an appropriation in the annual budget bill for the Maryland
10 Economic Development Corporation to encourage certain entities to locate in a
11 health innovation zone in Prince George’s County; exempting certain entities from
12 local zoning and land use laws; and generally relating to health innovation zones.

13 BY adding to

14 Article – Health – General
15 Section 20–14A–01 through 20–14A–04 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 14A.
16 Health Innovation Zones”
17 Annotated Code of Maryland
18 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

19 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
20 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

21 **Article – Health – General**

22 **SUBTITLE 14A. HEALTH INNOVATION ZONES.**

23 **20–14A–01.**

24 **IN THIS SUBTITLE, “HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE” MEANS A CONTIGUOUS**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 **GEOGRAPHIC AREA THAT:**

2 **(1) DEMONSTRATES MEASURABLE AND DOCUMENTED HEALTH**
3 **DISPARITIES AND POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES, INCLUDING HIGH RATES OF:**

4 **(I) MATERNAL HEALTH COMPLICATIONS;**

5 **(II) NEWBORN HEALTH COMPLICATIONS; AND**

6 **(III) CHRONIC AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES;**

7 **(2) IS POPULATED BY:**

8 **(I) COMMUNITIES OF COLOR;**

9 **(II) COMMUNITIES WITH LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS;**

10 **(III) COMMUNITIES WITH A HIGH IMMIGRANT POPULATION; OR**

11 **(IV) ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES; AND**

12 **(3) IS SMALL ENOUGH TO ALLOW FOR THE INCENTIVES UNDER THIS**
13 **SUBTITLE TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES AND**
14 **REDUCING HEALTH DISPARITIES, INCLUDING RACIAL, ETHNIC, GEOGRAPHIC, AND**
15 **DISABILITY-RELATED HEALTH DISPARITIES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES.**

16 **20-14A-02.**

17 **(A) SUBJECT TO § 20-14A-03 OF THIS SUBTITLE, THE LOCAL ZONING**
18 **AUTHORITY OF A COUNTY MAY DESIGNATE A HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE IF THE**
19 **AREA TO BE DESIGNATED:**

20 **(1) IS A FOOD OR HEALTH CARE DESERT;**

21 **(2) HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF:**

22 **(I) CANCER;**

23 **(II) DIABETES;**

24 **(III) HEART DISEASE; OR**

25 **(IV) HYPERTENSION; AND**

1 **(3) HAS A LOW PREVALENCE OF GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES,**
2 **PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS.**

3 **(B) IF A LOCAL ZONING AUTHORITY OF A COUNTY DESIGNATES A HEALTH**
4 **INNOVATION ZONE UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, THE COUNTY SHALL**
5 **ESTABLISH, BY LAW, INCENTIVES THAT WILL BE PROVIDED TO GROCERY STORES,**
6 **PHARMACIES, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS THAT**
7 **LOCATE IN THE HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE.**

8 **20-14A-03.**

9 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
10 **INDICATED.**

11 **(2) “MEDCO” MEANS THE MARYLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
12 **CORPORATION.**

13 **(3) “PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY BLUE LINE CORRIDOR” HAS THE**
14 **MEANING STATED IN § 10-601 OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARTICLE.**

15 **(B) THIS SECTION APPLIES ONLY TO PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY.**

16 **(C) THE PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY COUNCIL SHALL DESIGNATE A**
17 **HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

18 **(1) PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY BLUE LINE CORRIDOR; AND**

19 **(2) THE AREA LOCATED WITHIN 2 MILES OF THE BORDER BETWEEN**
20 **PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

21 **(D) THE PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY COUNCIL MAY DESIGNATE**
22 **ADDITIONAL HEALTH INNOVATION ZONES IF THE AREA TO BE DESIGNATED:**

23 **(1) IS A FOOD OR HEALTH CARE DESERT;**

24 **(2) HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF:**

25 **(I) CANCER;**

26 **(II) DIABETES;**

27 **(III) HEART DISEASE; OR**

1 **(IV) HYPERTENSION; AND**

2 **(3) HAS A LOW PREVALENCE OF GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES,**
3 **PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS.**

4 **(E) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2028, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN**
5 **THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF AT LEAST \$5,000,000 TO**
6 **MEDCO TO ENCOURAGE GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES, PRIMARY CARE**
7 **PROVIDERS, AND SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS TO LOCATE IN A HEALTH**
8 **INNOVATION ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.**

9 **(F) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2028, MEDCO SHALL PROVIDE FUNDING TO**
10 **ENCOURAGE GROCERY STORES, PHARMACIES, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS, AND**
11 **SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS TO ESTABLISH A BUSINESS IN A HEALTH INNOVATION**
12 **ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.**

13 **(G) MEDCO SHALL LOOK FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES TO**
14 **ENCOURAGE HEALTH INNOVATION BUSINESS GROWTH IN A HEALTH INNOVATION**
15 **ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.**

16 **20-14A-04.**

17 **A GROCERY STORE, PHARMACY, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER, AND SPECIALTY**
18 **CARE PROVIDER LOCATED IN A HEALTH INNOVATION ZONE ESTABLISHED UNDER**
19 **THIS SUBTITLE ARE NOT SUBJECT TO LOCAL ZONING OR LAND USE LAWS.**

20 **SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect**
21 **October 1, 2026.**