

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
2024 Legislative Session

Resolution No. CR-101-2024

Proposed by Council Member Blegay

Introduced by Council Members Blegay, Oriadha, Fisher, Harrison, Olson, Watson,
Hawkins, Burroughs and Dernoga

Co-Sponsors _____

Date of Introduction November 12, 2024

RESOLUTION

1 A RESOLUTION concerning

2 Creation of a Work Group to Explore Equitable Access to Primary Health Care for all Prince
3 George's County Residents

4 For the purpose of assisting in establishing a county-wide health program that provides access to
5 primary care services for all Prince George's County residents who are ineligible for existing
6 healthcare programs.

7 WHEREAS, the Health Assures Program (the "Program"), was built on a partnership
8 between the Prince George's County Department of Health, the Prince George's County
9 Healthcare Alliance and six (6) Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) with clinics in the
10 County; and

11 WHEREAS, the Program provides health coverage for all eligible adults and children
12 residing in the County at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and are ineligible for
13 Medicaid, MCHIP or other subsidized healthcare programs; and

14 WHEREAS, the Program began in FY 2018 with \$117,000 that the Health Dept. allocated
15 from its budget, which was increased to \$250,000 in FY 2019. Funding was increased to \$5
16 million with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in FY 2022 and was a line item in the
17 County budget through FY 2024; and

18 WHEREAS, In FY 2023, the Program subsidized over 45 thousand visits, although the
19 available funds were expended by February of 2023; and

20 WHEREAS, the Program is not comprehensive and offers limited provider choice for
21 patients. It does not provide access to specialty care or medications. It does not subsidize primary

1 care outside of the County's six (6) FQHCs. There are currently no comprehensive school-based
2 health centers in the County that could provide healthcare to uninsured children, to supplement
3 the Health Assures program; and

4 WHEREAS, the program used to be administered by the Prince George's County
5 Healthcare Alliance, however, that organization is now defunct. The current program does not
6 have the resources to ensure the consistent or optimal oversight, program development,
7 implementation, and evaluation; and

8 WHEREAS, data from the program is available but is not being organized or analyzed in
9 any meaningful way. Reimbursement was initially distributed to participating FQHCs as a grant
10 based on the proportion of eligible residents served during the prior year before transitioning to a
11 fee-for-service program; and

12 WHEREAS, in 2021, the Prince George's County Health Zone found that 89 percent of the
13 County's population has health insurance, meaning that roughly 105,000 people in the County
14 are without health insurance. The areas with the highest density of uninsured residents are in the
15 north of the County, including Langley Park, Adelphi, Bladensburg, and Riverdale. This is due
16 to a variety of factors, including immigration status and language access challenges, as just under
17 half of the uninsured in the County were non-citizens in 2022; and

18 WHEREAS, health insurance costs tend to be higher in places where a significant portion
19 of the population goes without coverage. Uninsured patients will receive emergency care out of
20 humanitarian obligation, but these patients often cannot afford to pay for the care they have
21 received; and

22 WHEREAS, to compensate for these costs, hospitals are forced to charge health insurance
23 providers more, and the health insurance companies pass those costs on to the consumers; and

24 WHEREAS, such a sustained situation has now become untenable hence the need for a
25 comprehensive strategy that provides access to primary care services for all Prince George's
26 County residents; and

27 WHEREAS, Section 506 of the Charter provides that the Council may appoint, for
28 designated periods, one or more temporary advisory boards of citizens of the County who shall
29 assist in the coordination of County policies and programs.

30 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Council of Prince George's
31 County, Maryland, that the Prince George's CARES and Health Reimbursements Work Group

(the “Work Group”) is hereby established to assist in creating a county-wide health program that provides access to primary care services for all Prince George’s County residents who are ineligible for existing healthcare programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the short-term goals of the Work Group are as follows:

- 1) Explore how the County can ensure continuity of funding for the Health Assures Program in FY 2026.
- 2) Identify different strategies for funding the Health Assures Program and make recommendations on FY 2026 funding strategy.
- 3) Identify consequences of reduction in funding on FQHC’s operations and the impact on the residents that they serve.
- 4) Identify what guaranteed funding for the Health Assures Program would mean for FQHCs operations and impact on the residents that they serve.
- 5) Ensure that funding is available to support administration, data collection, analysis and reporting.
- 6) Make recommendations for improving administration of the Health Assures Program, such as who should administer the program, what tasks should be performed by administrator and funding level, etc.
- 7) Identify metrics for evaluating the for Health Assures Program that should be available on an annual basis to the Council and other stakeholders.
- 8) Ensure that funding is available to support administration, data collection, analysis and reporting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the long-term goals of the Work Group are as follows:

- 1) Develop clear operational goals for the County’s Prince George’s Cares Program and a multi-year plan and milestones on how they are to be achieved.
- 2) Identify and evaluate different strategies for long term funding of all components of the Prince George’s Cares Program.
- 3) Develop a multi-year funding strategy with annual funding goals, how they will be achieved (sources of funding) and corresponding anticipated operational implications.
- 4) Make recommendations to ensure that there are sufficient resources allocated for program administration and to ensure that all administrative tasks are being performed in a timely optimal manner.

- 1 5) Recommend program reporting metrics that will cover both operational and
 2 programmatic, budgetary and performance and service delivery metrics to enable
 3 ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Prince George's Cares Program.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Work Group shall be composed of twenty (20)
 5 members:

- 6 1) The Council Member who sponsored this legislation or their designee shall serve as
 7 Chair.
 8 2) Two members of the County Council.
 9 3) Four representatives from Federal Qualified Health Care Centers based in Prince
 10 George's County.
 11 4) One representative from the Regional Primary Care Coalition.
 12 5) One representative of a nonprofit serving immigrant and frequently underserved
 13 communities who utilize Federal Qualified Health Care Centers.
 14 6) The Health Officer, or a designee.
 15 7) One representative of the Office of Management and Budget, or a designee.
 16 8) One representative of Prince George's County Schools.
 17 9) Three representatives from County based hospital/medical system.
 18 10) One representative of the Office of Finance, or a designee.
 19 11) Three representatives of the Health Department.
 20 12) One representative of the Department of Family Services.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Work Group can request assistance from other
 22 experts on as needed basis to achieve its goals and objectives.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Work Group shall meet twice monthly to develop
 24 the short-term goals and funding plan in preparation for FY 2026 budget, beginning in January of
 25 2025. Recommendations should be made to the County Council no later than Friday, March 14,
 26 2025.

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after making recommendations for the FY 2026
 28 budget, the Work Group shall meet monthly, or more frequently as deemed necessary by the
 29 Work Group leadership and prepare a long-term plan for the Prince George's CARES Program.
 30 The long-term plan will be delivered to the Council by December 15, 2025.

Adopted this 19th day of November, 2024.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PRINCE
GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY: _____
Jolene Ivey
Chair

ATTEST:

Donna J. Brown
Clerk of the Council