

## 2018 PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

The goal of public policy must be to assure that across our state, Marylanders regardless of age, race, religion, socio-economic background, gender identity, location, or disability, can share in a prosperous and inclusive economy. To further that goal and secure a high quality of life for all, Maryland Nonprofits has identified the following major policy priorities for the coming year.

### INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

A strong education system, vibrant arts and culture, employment programs for people with disabilities and people returning from incarceration, programs for seniors and youth, supporting green infrastructure, accessible childcare, and community innovation are all effective ways to expand our workforce and grow our economy. Excellent and effective programs require adequate resources, but Maryland's funding for many health, education, social and cultural services and facilities has been limited by recent 'structural deficits'. For more than a decade state budgets have failed to provide the true costs of many of these vital and effective services, creating barriers to opportunity, especially among low-income people, communities of color, seniors and people with disabilities. Recent and future federal budget and tax policy changes are likely to worsen this situation. In 2018, Maryland must be ready to take action to strengthen the programs, services and policies needed to provide for the future growth of our economy, creating an inclusive workforce, and protecting our quality of life for all.

### SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Securing safe, affordable housing is a challenge for a significant proportion of Maryland households and for many served by nonprofit organizations. The average 'starter' home is not affordable for many first-time buyers, and half of all renting households face housing costs that are over 30% of their income. The State must do more to resolve serious underlying problems such as the inadequate supply of affordable housing and inadequate funding for community investment. Budget cuts have delayed or deferred housing funds in the past, and existing federal programs and funding are threatened by changing policies and tax cuts. Maryland must prohibit housing discrimination against those using government assistance and to assure fair treatment for renters.

## EXPANDING PUBLIC TRANSIT

The adequacy of transportation services and infrastructure, particularly public transit, has a substantial impact on our economy, as well as on nonprofits and the people they serve. From urban centers to suburbs, the Eastern Shore to Western Maryland, people need access to public transit in order to participate in opportunities to work, to further their education, to get to the doctor, and lead fulfilling lives, regardless of owning a car or having the physical ability to drive. We will support efforts to strengthen the state's commitment to swift and efficient public transit across the state, enabling more people to join the workforce, stay healthy, and grow our economy.

## PROTECTING MARYLANDERS' HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Maryland has taken significant steps in recent years to expand access to health care through Medicaid and other programs. However, this progress is threatened by possible federal policy and budget changes. Investment in programs that promote access to healthy food and exercise, help people recover from addiction and stop smoking, and initiatives that ensure people with chronic conditions maintain strong health habits, and eliminating price gouging on prescriptions are all proven ways to bring down health costs. Our environment also has a significant impact on the health of our communities and public infrastructure, and environmental hazards often have disproportionate effects on low-income communities and communities of color. Investing in sustainable development and growing our "green economy" has great potential for expanding jobs and protecting against the impact of climate change and health problems that are exacerbated by pollution. Our environment can be improved in a way that invests in communities, promotes tourism and recreation, and preserves the beauty and vitality of our beloved state of Maryland.

**In addition to these policy priorities, we will actively work on other policy issues, consistent with our policy principles, past policy positions and policy commitments.** For more information, or to join our efforts, contact Henry Bogdan, Maryland Nonprofits Director of Public Policy at [hbogdan@mdnonprofit.org](mailto:hbogdan@mdnonprofit.org) or 443-438-2318.