



Testimony of Nilesh Kalyanaraman, MD
Chief Health Officer, Health Care for the Homeless

before the

Baltimore County Council

on the

Grant - Prologue, Inc. – Homeless Outreach Program - 609 Baltimore Avenue, Towson

August 29, 2017
Old Court House, 2nd Floor
400 Washington Avenue
Towson, Maryland

Good afternoon, Chairman Quirk and members of the Council. I am Dr. Nilesh Kalyanaraman, Chief Health Officer for Health Care for the Homeless. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed Baltimore County Department of Planning grant to help Prologue, Inc. acquire its 609 Baltimore Avenue site in Towson.

Health Care for the Homeless is a nonprofit federally qualified health center that works to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing integrated, whole-person health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy and community engagement. Our agency has clinics in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Harford County, and annually treats more than 10,000 individuals experiencing homelessness.

Our work in Baltimore County is vital to our mission of providing integrated, whole-person care. We will soon open a significantly expanded clinic in the Eastern Family Resource Center, on the campus of Franklin Square Medical Center, so that we are better positioned to meet the increasing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Baltimore County. But we cannot, and must not, work to prevent and end homelessness alone; our staff regularly partners with Prologue, an organization which provides outreach assistance for individuals and families in need of food, clothing, laundry services and internet connection needed to research housing and job opportunities. Prologue works closely with our agency to go out in to the community, and engage individuals so that they can get permanent supportive housing.

It is essential for Prologue to maintain its services in downtown Towson, where it is easily accessible via mass transit, and has been operating without issue for over 20 years. Their longtime presence has allowed Prologue's staff to build trusting relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness in Baltimore County; it means that when 44 people needed to escape the heat one sweltering day this July, they knew they could find refuge at 609 Baltimore Avenue. And their Homeless Outreach Program has built relationships to engage some of Baltimore County's most vulnerable citizens into care. Those in need, without homes, know they can go to Prologue when they need help.

Their work helps people like Pops, Sharon, and Robert--who lived together in an encampment for 10 years--and then got housed together. Health Care for the Homeless provided their medical care,

while Prologue provided case management and housing services. This is just one example of the frequent collaboration that takes place between our agencies.

Prologue provides a place for clients to go during the day, when shelter programs are often closed. And when clients need medical or behavioral health care, they refer patients to Health Care for the Homeless, and help coordinate transportation between our sites. Together, we have a vital trust among Baltimore County individuals experiencing homelessness.

Prologue's outreach is effective because its teams meet clients where they are, whether it is on the streets, in vehicles, in campsites or in shelters. From there, they seek to place people experiencing homelessness into housing, where their health tends to improve dramatically. The agency also provides basic life dignities, like a shower and clean pair of socks, to our neighbors without homes.

Homelessness is a symptom of poverty. It does not have to be permanent. I urge you to support the Planning Department's grant for Prologue, so it can continue its necessary work in Baltimore County, and we can prevent and end homelessness.