



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 734

Primary Care Reform Commission

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of the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.

February 23, 2022

SUPPORT WITH AMMENDMENT

Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 734. Thank you Senator Lam for introducing this important bill.

The Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc. was established in 1999 to advocate for policies which expand access to quality affordable health care for all Marylanders. Since that time our state has achieved historic coverage gains, reducing the rate of uninsured from 13 percent to 6.5 percent in 2018. This year, over 180,000 Marylanders have enrolled in coverage through the Maryland Health Connection! High rates of insurance coverage are associated with better health outcomes and a stronger health care system. These indicators are a testament to the vision and leadership on this committee which has taken decisive policy action to enact reinsurance and pilot subsidies for low-income young adults.

While coverage plays an important role, it is not synonymous with access. The members of our coalition—hundreds of faith, business, professional and community leaders across the state—have expressed concern about difficulties accessing primary care. Primary care plays a critical role in our state's efforts to prevent and better manage chronic diseases. Primary care providers are often the face of the health care system and being able to establish a long-term, trusting relationship with these providers is critical to achieve our ambitious Statewide Integrated Health Improvement Strategy.

SUGGESTED AMMENDMENT: We are committed to supporting the work of this commission to the extent practicable and are pleased to see the inclusion of a consumer health advocate among the list of commission members. **We suggest the addition of a representative of health care workers on the commission to further strengthen representation of affected stakeholders.**

Thank you for your careful consideration of this issue. We urge a favorable review.

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