



15 Visitors Center Drive, McHenry, Maryland 21541
Telephone: 301-387-6171

February 14, 2022

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB0709 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange –
Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program**

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS (FWA)

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our 500 business members in the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce of which the majority are small businesses, this statement is in **support with amendments to HB0709 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program.**

HB0709 would invest \$45 million a year into a five-year state subsidy program for small businesses and nonprofits with fewer than 25 full-time employees. This program would provide subsidies to qualified employers and their employees for their health coverage through Maryland Health Connection, plus \$3 million/year for outreach to notify small employers about the new program. The program should be funded by available federal funding.

Although the Maryland Health Exchange provides funding for several good programs including the Medical Assistance Program, Senior Prescription Drug Assistance Program, and the State-Based Young Adult Health Insurance Subsidies Pilot Program, there currently is no funding for the Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program. Yet, there is clearly a major need to assist small businesses in providing health insurance assistance to their employees.

Currently, only 37% of small employers in the State of Maryland offer health insurance to their employee's vs 95% of larger employers. During one of the most difficult times in our history, small businesses have had to deal with a major pandemic, loss of revenue, fear of losing their business, as well as finding and keeping employees. HB0709 is a critical Bill that would go a long way into providing a solution to the issues facing small business owners when it comes to providing some form of affordable group health plan for their employees.

Please note that we recommend that an amendment be added to the legislation that would add a five (5) year sunset provision on the bill, so everyone can know what the landscape would look like after the subsidy ends, and companies can make future investment decisions, or conversely, the General Assembly could vote to extend the subsidy payment.

The Garrett County Chamber of Commerce joins Chambers of Commerce from throughout the State of Maryland and urge you to vote FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS for HB0709 and help to grow our small business community.

Sincerely,

Holly Lane

Holly Lane
Project Coordinator

cc: Members of the House Health & Government Operations Committee
Delegate Robbyn Lewis, Sponsor
Delegate Brooke E. Lierman, Sponsor
Delegate Karen Lewis Young, Sponsor

Senator Katie Fry Hester, Sponsor, SB0632
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Sponsor, SB0632
Senator Joanne C. Benson, Sponsor, SB0632

AA_HGO@mlis.state.md.us
robbyn.lewis@house.state.md.us
Brooke.Lierman@house.state.md.us
Karen.Young@house.state.md.us
katiefry.hester@senate.state.md.us
brian.feldman@senate.state.md.us
joanne.benson@senate.state.md.us