

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 709
Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies
Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
By Central Maryland Ecumenical Council (CMEC)
4 E. University Parkways, Baltimore, MD 21218
February 17, 2022

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

We would like to thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 709.

Central Maryland Ecumenical Council represents Christian denominations across Maryland. We seek to advocate on behalf of any environmental, racial, social, and/or economic bills that affirm the imago dei of all persons. Supporting House Bill 709 is part of our mission to support the providing of affordable health care to all Marylanders. This bill will lift the quality of life for many business employees and owners.

HB 709 would invest \$45 million/year into a five-year state subsidy program for small businesses and nonprofits to offer employees health coverage through Maryland Health Connection, plus \$3 million/year for outreach to notify small employers about the new program. This legislation is needed because in Maryland only 37% of small employers offer health coverage to their employees compared to 95% of large employers.¹ Cost is a major reason. This legislation will help employees of small businesses and nonprofits access quality, affordable health coverage which is especially critical as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

This bill will also improve health equity. Small businesses are more likely than large businesses to be owned by people of color and Maryland has the highest rate per-capita of businesses owned by people of color in the nation.² Providing better opportunities for small businesses and nonprofits to provide health coverage will make Maryland a more healthy and equitable state. We urge a favorable report for HB 709.

In the spirit of Christ,

Rev. Dellyne Hinton

President,

Central Maryland Ecumenical Council

¹ Agency for Health Quality and Research. Table II.A.2 Percent of private-sector establishments that offer health insurance by firm size and State: United States, 2020. https://meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_stats/summ_tables/insr/state/series_2/2020/tia2.pdf (Accessed November 23, 2021)

² Mirabella, L. The Baltimore Sun. "Maryland ranks No. 1 in U.S. for Minority and women businesses ownership, study finds." April 18, 2018. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bs-bz-minority-owned-business-maryland-20180418-story.html>