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BILL NO.: **House Bill 709**

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

SPONSOR: Delegate R. Lewis

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 17, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 709 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program. This legislation would establish a program in the State to provide subsidies to small business and nonprofit employers and their employees for the purchase of qualified health benefit plans on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that access to healthcare for all Maryland residents is crucial to personal and public health. Many small businesses cannot afford to provide private health insurance to their employees at the same rate as larger corporations. This leads many Marylanders to forgo health insurance, purchase personal plans at a high premium, or opt out of employment at smaller businesses altogether.

House Bill 709 creates a program to assist small businesses and nonprofits with providing healthcare to employees. By providing subsidies for employers and their employees to purchase health insurance, this bill brings Maryland closer to achieving equitable health coverage access for all residents and supports the development of small businesses and nonprofits as viable employment opportunities.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 709. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.