



February 15, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 365 – Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act) - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members,

The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) is submitting this letter in support for *SB 365 - Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)*. SB 365 alters the purpose of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) Fund to include the provision of funding for the establishment and operation of the Qualified Resident Enrollment Program. The bill requires the MHBE to make qualified plans available to qualified residents and to establish and implement the Qualified Resident Enrollment Program. In addition, allowing qualified residents to obtain coverage, facilitate the enrollment of qualified residents in qualified health plans, and based on the availability of funds, provide premium assistance and cost-sharing reductions to qualified residents. Lastly, the implementation of the Qualified Resident Enrollment Program is contingent on approval of the federal State Innovation Waiver application amendment. Beginning January 1, 2025, funding for the program may be made using any federal pass-through funds received under an approved federal waiver and any funds designated by the federal or State government to provide health coverage for qualified residents.

The Maryland Health Care Commission believes that all Maryland residents should have access to health care. With the passage of the Affordable Healthcare Act and the expansion of Medicaid the number of uninsured individuals in the state has gone down. However, there remains a significant number of individuals who are uninsured because of their status as non-citizens and therefore they are not eligible for certain programs where they could obtain needed healthcare. One way to ensure access is by allowing all Maryland residents, regardless of residency status, the opportunity to purchase health coverage through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE).

In their 2021 Joint Chairmen’s Report the MHBE noted several options that the State could pursue to expand health care coverage to this undocumented immigrant population. All of the options noted have costs associated with them. Under SB 365 the MHBE is required to apply for in consultation with the Insurance Commissioner and as approved by the MHBE Board, to submit a federal State Innovation Waiver (1332 waiver) application by July 1, 2023. The waiver application must seek to establish a Qualified Resident State Subsidy Program and request federal pass-through funding to

allow “qualified residents” to obtain coverage, including State premium assistance and cost-sharing reductions (CSRs), through MHBE. Premium assistance, cost-sharing reductions, and potentially a state-only Medicaid expansion are all key components of a broad-based coverage expansion attractive to “qualified residents” of Maryland. Funding commitments must be adequate and sustainable if “qualified residents” are to enroll. This will require careful balancing of State health insurance coverage priorities including this expansion, the reinsurance program, and subsidy program for young adults. Maryland is a prosperous State, MHCC believes the General Assembly can balance these priorities without undo dependence on federal funds or the imposition of an excessive burden on taxpayers.

If you would like to discuss this legislation or our existing efforts, please contact Ben Steffen, Executive Director, Maryland Health Care Commission at ben.steffen@maryland.gov or Tracey DeShields, Director of Policy Development and External Affairs at tracey.deshields2@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Ben Steffen,
Executive Director

