



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0365

**Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program
(Access to Care Act)**

FAVORABLE

TO: Senator Melony Griffith, Chair. Senator Katherine Klausmeier and members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

DATE: February 15, 2023

The Episcopal Church supports comprehensive health care and recognizes the need for universal and equitable access for all. General Convention urges Episcopalians to advocate for adequate health care, along with nutrition and housing, as human rights that should be provided to all those residing in our nation, including immigrants, undocumented or otherwise. This advocacy on a number of healthcare policy asks is viewed as a Church ministry and as a way to promote healthy American communities.

Although Maryland has taken bold steps toward ensuring everyone has access to care, the immigrant community has been left behind. Unfortunately, 275K+ undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) due to their immigration status. Multiple states across the country have established comprehensive programs to extend coverage to immigrants regardless of their immigration status, and despite the profound cultural contributions immigrants make to the state, along with their essential role in the Maryland workforce and millions in contributions to society and the economy through federal, state, and local taxes - they are still ineligible for the Affordable Care Act.

SB365 addresses critical health disparities faced by the immigrant community in Maryland by expanding the Affordable Care Act to all Marylanders who meet the regular eligibility, regardless of their immigration status. SB365 also establishes a State Subsidy Program to ensure newly covered individuals have the funding to receive care.



SB365 is not only critical legislation for our undocumented community, but it is also sound policy for the state. According to the 2022 fiscal analysis for the same proposal, SB365 would reduce premiums in the individual market by 2.3% in the first year it is enacted. Furthermore, having access to the individual marketplace and a doctor will decrease the number of emergency room visits that uninsured individuals with illnesses make. Access to routine yearly checkups will ensure that our undocumented immigrant children, youth, and adults live better, healthier, and more productive lifestyles that ultimately make our communities more vibrant.

This common-sense legislation is uncontentious and aligns Maryland with its values of protecting life and treating all people with dignity, respect, and care, which happens to be the promise that all Episcopalians make at their baptism.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report