

Dear Finance Committee,

My name is Rianna Eckel, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA. I am a resident of the 43rd District, and as a self-employed Marylander, I am enrolled in health insurance through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. Being able to access affordable health care outside of employment has changed my life and opened so many doors for me. It is important to me that all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status, be able to access the benefits that I have been afforded through the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange. **I am testifying in support of passing SB0365, the Access to Care Act, with amendments.** This bill:



- Opens up the MD Health Benefits Exchange (ACA Coverage) to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility, regardless of their immigration status
- Establishes a State Subsidy Program to ensure newly covered individuals have the funding to receive care
- Requires the state to submit a state innovation waiver (under 1332 of the Affordable Care Act) to allow MD to make this change to eligibility.
- Provides (as amended) that any newly qualified set of individuals get the same subsidy as anyone who is currently covered.

Unfortunately, over 275,000 undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Exchange. The Access to Care Act would open the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (ACA Coverage) to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility, regardless of their immigrant status.

Our state and communities become stronger and more resilient when we expand health care coverage. Benefits of expanded coverage include:

- Increased access to primary care physicians that results in earlier detection of health problems and more stable long-term management of chronic diseases; this decreases the number of people who die at earlier ages from preventable causes.
- Greater access to primary care clinics and medical practices that results in reduced use of emergency departments (ED); this decreases the number seeking care at EDs and reduces the cost of ED care for all of us.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of passing SB0365 (Access to Care Act) with amendments.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rianna Eckel
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore