

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland. I am a resident of **District 41**. **I am testifying in support of SB0806, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report Bill.**



As a retired medical social worker, I feel strongly about this bill. I met many people who were not citizens and did not have health insurance in the 30 years that I worked in medical settings. I had clients with chronic and terminal illness in Maryland. I found that without insurance, people could not get necessary treatment to prolong their lives or to live comfortably with a serious illness. Lack of health insurance not only affected the sick person, but also their families. I had a patient with cancer who was told by her doctor that she couldn't get treatment because she had no insurance. She also could not apply for Medicaid since she was not a citizen. Her only option was to wait to die. She was 28 years old with 2 young children. While it is true that emergency rooms take care of sick people, they can't provide ongoing care like chemotherapy or radiation treatment. Unfortunately, there aren't any care options for people with cancer. Cancer is a death sentence since they can't receive treatments.

This bill will require the Department of Health to conduct a study comparing options for providing health insurance coverage to undocumented immigrants who would be eligible for Medicaid but for their immigration status.

Right now, undocumented immigrants in Maryland pay billions in dollars of federal and state taxes¹, but are ineligible for healthcare through Medicaid. Ineligibility for Medicaid has left over 300,000 undocumented Marylanders uninsured. Additionally, providing equitable coverage for undocumented immigrants makes financial sense. Right now, undocumented patients receive care much later in the course of diseases,² which means that they face serious, and more costly, health conditions in the long run. Oftentimes undocumented immigrants rely on the emergency room again and again, which can be very expensive. Shifting from emergency care to prevention would mean that diseases are caught early and treatments could be avoided, reducing costs over time. Opponents to this bill and ultimately to providing health insurance coverage to undocumented immigrants may claim that providing healthcare for undocumented immigrants would lead to an influx of people requesting free healthcare. The current data suggests otherwise. Since 2016, California has included undocumented children in its Medicaid coverage and has seen no increase in migration of undocumented immigrants³. European countries who have extended their healthcare coverage to migrants have also not seen any indication of "health tourism".⁴

Today I am calling upon you, as my representative in the Maryland Legislature, to follow through on the responsibility you have to care for all of their constituents' needs. Please vote **in support of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report Bill (SB0806)**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Bonnie Weissberg
1704 Mt. Washington Ct., Apt. H, Baltimore, MD 21209

¹ <https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-undocumented-immigrants-and-federal-health-care-benefits/>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14981600/>

³ <https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2759639>

⁴ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-we-must-not-exclude-irregular-migrants-from-health-care/>