



# Indivisible: Central Maryland

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## TESTIMONY FOR SB0806

### Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health – Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants – Report

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Hettleman

**Committee:** Finance

**Organization Submitting:** Indivisible Central Maryland

**Person Submitting:** Liz Enagonio and Susan Radke, lead advocates

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Our names are Liz Enagonio and Susan Radke, lead advocates for Indivisible Central Maryland, a grassroots organization of constituents dedicated to protecting progressive and democratic values. Indivisible Central Maryland **strongly supports SB0806**.

You have seen and heard other testimony that lays out the facts: that more than 275,000 undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for health care through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MBHE). Let me note that some DOCUMENTED immigrants remain ineligible as well. One of the immigrants I work with through my volunteer group Asylum Helpers has been granted asylum, but remains ineligible to access any government programs, including medical care through the MHBE, even though he has a work permit, a job, and pays Federal, State, and social security taxes. Sadly, this extends to his wife and young son who remain undocumented because they are still awaiting their asylum hearing after 4 years in the US because the court system is so backed up. This means that if one of the family members get sick, they must seek care through an urgent care center, or if more serious, through an emergency room. They are then liable for whatever costs they may incur, with no insurance assistance. So, of course, those family members have had NO well-child or well-woman care since they arrived in the US.

As well, one of their cousins, age 4 years, was actually accepted into CASA's medical relief program, but there are no pediatricians in Prince George's County to accept him as a patient under the CASA program. He has had no well-child care, let alone sick child care, since arriving here in 2021. Of note, that branch of the family DID have health coverage through the state of Oregon's Health Benefit Exchange. Maryland needs to provide the same opportunity.

SB0806 tasks the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health with developing a report on how the state can most cost-effectively deliver affordable health care

to Maryland residents who are ineligible for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, the Maryland Children's Health Program, or qualified health plans through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange solely due to the individuals' immigration status. This report is a necessary first step to explore how best to meet the health care insurance needs of our immigrant neighbors. **On behalf of our valued immigrant community, Indivisible Central Maryland STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB0806 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee. Thank you.**