

Testimony for the Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

By: Willie J. Mahone

Organization: Frederick County NAACP

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I write as President and representative of the Frederick County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to support Senate Bill 305, known as the Access to Care Act. That Bill basically provides for immigrant participation in the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, making healthcare available to the immigrant community.

Our local Branch has been supportive of various efforts of inclusion of the Frederick County immigrant community, in recognition of their plight and journey as marginalized people; akin to the journey of African Americans. Indeed many of the local immigrant community are African diaspora and face the dual barriers of race and being foreign born---the same barriers faced by American Blacks prior to the enactment of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, and de facto thereafter. Additionally some of those immigrants are members of our NAACP chapter, and we have embarked a general partnership with the local immigrant community chapter. To those ends, we recognize and appreciate the need for basic healthcare in securing the minimal quality of life. The legion scourges of uninsured and underinsured populations are well documented, and most pronouncedly revealed during the COVID 19 endemic. Our organization upholds the principles of justice, fairness, equality, and basic human rights; and align with any population in pursuit of those goals.

On a personal level; though not currently practicing law, over a more than forty (40) year legal career I have had the opportunity to represent and interact with many persons of the immigrant community. I have appeared in Immigration and Custom (ICE) proceedings, asylum petitions, DACA and citizenship applications, and childhood arrival (border children) proceedings. I have also provided services to immigrants in custody, adoption/family law matters, and various other areas. As such I have become familiar with the general circumstances and plight of those persons, and their need for safety-net programs that facilitate viable families and productive members of overall communities. Healthcare access is one of the primary life sustaining needs.

Thanks for consideration of my statement.

Willie J. Mahone, President
Frederick County NAACP

