



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy

Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

SB0806 Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report

Hearing Date: 03/08/23

Committee: Finance

Position: SUPPORT

Senator Melony Griffith and Members of the Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 0806. The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) would like to express support for Senate Bill 0806. This bill will require the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health to develop a report comparing options for offering affordable health care coverage to State residents who are ineligible for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, the Maryland Children's Health Program, or qualified health plans due to the individuals' immigration status. Furthermore, it requires the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to report its findings and recommendations to certain committees of the General Assembly by October 31, 2023.

Undocumented immigrants face unique challenges in the U.S. health care system^{1,2}. They are ineligible for federal insurance programs in the Affordable Care Act (ACA), resulting in the lowest health care coverage rates of any segment of the U.S. population¹. Lack of coverage has led to harmful delays in care, increased acute care utilization, and poor health outcomes²⁻⁶. A recent literature review found that national policies excluding undocumented immigrants from receiving health care were the most commonly cited barriers to health care¹, which prompted a wave of strategies and interventions at local and state levels. The Maryland Public Health Association is committed to the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion, consequently, we believe that Maryland should join other states which have passed laws to aid undocumented in obtaining access to health care coverage.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge a favorable report of SB 0806.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of

¹Hacker K, Anies M, Folb BL, Zallman L. Barriers to health care for undocumented immigrants: a literature review. *Risk Manag Healthc Policy* 2015;8:175-83 doi 10.2147/RMHP.S70173.

²Beck TL, Le TK, Henry-Okafor Q, Shah MK. Medical Care for Undocumented Immigrants: National and International Issues. *Prim Care* 2017;44(1):e1-e13 doi 10.1016/j.pop.2016.09.005.

³Falik M, Needleman J, Wells BL, Korb J. Ambulatory care sensitive hospitalizations and emergency visits: experiences of Medicaid patients using federally qualified health centers. *Med Care* 2001;39(6):551-61 doi 10.1097/00005650-200106000-00004.

⁴Philbin MM, Flake M, Hatzenbuehler ML, Hirsch JS. State-level immigration and immigrant-focused policies as drivers of Latino health disparities in the United States. *Social science & medicine* 2018;199:29-38.

⁵Gray NA, Boucher NA, Cervantes L, Berlinger N, Smith SK, Johnson KS. Hospice Access and Scope of Services for Undocumented Immigrants: A Clinician Survey. *J Palliat Med* 2021;24(8):1167-73 doi 10.1089/jpm.2020.0547.

⁶Cervantes L, Fischer S, Berlinger N, Zabalaga M, Camacho C, Linas S, et al. The Illness Experience of Undocumented Immigrants With End-stage Renal Disease. *JAMA Intern Med* 2017;177(4):529-35 doi 10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.8865.

public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MDPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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