



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee Members  
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus  
DATE: March 6th, 2023  
RE: HB1149 End the Wait Act

### **The MLLC supports HB1149 End the Wait Act**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1149.

Multiple governmental health agencies have worked together to develop a plan that reduces the waitlist for specific waiver programs by 50% beginning in the fiscal year 2024. In order to accomplish this, additional funding is needed to be used for hiring and retaining providers in certain waiver programs. The waiver programs don't have enough resources, funding, and staff to provide services for eligible individuals. As a result, Maryland Medicaid waivers have a wait-list of 21,000 names, as of 2022.<sup>1</sup> While wait times for these programs vary from state to state, most leave applicants to wait an average of 39 months.<sup>2</sup> Many individuals age out or pass away before they get off of the waitlist. Reducing the number of names on the waitlist will increase enrollment, which means more individuals will get the resources they need.

This is pertinent to the Latino community because it provides access to health services and care opportunities that those individuals may have never unlocked without the assistance of these waiver programs. The uninsured rates among Black and Latino adults remain significantly higher than that of white adults.<sup>3</sup> As of 2019, there were approximately 1.83 million uninsured Latino children in the nation, an increase of 354,400 children compared to 2016.<sup>4</sup> In Maryland, the uninsured rate for Latino children was 7.5% in 2019, getting closer to the national uninsured rate of 9.3%.<sup>5</sup> One of the waitlists that needs time reduction is the Autism Waiver, and according to the National Survey of Children's Health, approximately 18 percent of black children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) reported unmet need and 27 percent of Latino children with

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<sup>1</sup> [Farr, E. H. \(2022, November 17\). Maryland Medicaid waivers have a wait-list of 21,000 names - is that ever going to change? Farr Law Firm.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [Baumgartner, J., Collins, S., & Radley, D. \(2021, June 9\). Racial and Ethnic Inequities in Health Care Coverage and Access, 2013–2019. Commonwealth Fund.](#)

<sup>4</sup> Whitener, K., Corcoran, A., Clark, M., Gardner, A., & Park, E. (2021, September 2). *Getting back on track: A detailed look at health coverage trends for Latino Children*. Center For Children and Families. <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2021/06/08/health-coverage-trends-for-latino-children/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

ASD reported unmet need.<sup>6</sup> This is just one of the many programs that the Latino community has a clear need for, yet that need is unmet due to the waitlist backlog of waiver programs.

This bill authorizes certain Medicaid funding to be used for hiring and retaining providers in certain waiver programs and alters the uses of certain funding appropriated to the Dedicated Purpose Account in the fiscal year 2023 budget bill. This bill aims at reducing the waitlists for certain waiver programs by 50%, beginning in fiscal year 2024.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1149.

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<sup>6</sup> [LaClair, M., Mandell, D. S., Dick, A. W., Iskandarani, K., Stein, B. D., & Leslie, D. L. \(2019\). The effect of Medicaid waivers on ameliorating racial/ethnic disparities among children with autism. \*Health Services Research\*, 54\(4\), 912–929.](#)