



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB363

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health -
Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report
House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 16, 2023

Dear Honorable Chair Peña-Melynk and Members of the Committee,

CASA is pleased to offer favorable testimony in strong support of the HB 363- Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report. CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 120,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families. This legislation represents an important milestone in our journey towards creating a resilient and equitable healthcare system that responds to the lessons learned by the recent pandemic, which impacted communities of color disproportionately.

CASA operates a robust Health and Human Services Department, where our offices work closely with undocumented Marylanders who are uninsured. The CASA health team helps thousands of families and individuals navigate the Health and Human Services System each year. From our case management assistance that connects members with social services to improve physical and mental health to our multilingual health hotline and medical interpreter program, to our comprehensive public benefits outreach and enrollment program - CASA is one of the leading and trusted organizations providing health support to the immigrant community. The majority of families we serve everyday are low-income Black and Latino families who lack access to health insurance programs and urgently need better, affordable options for care.

In 2022 this committee took a bold step in ensuring that pregnant women have access to care for their unborn babies. The Healthy Babies Equity Act, expands Medicaid to pregnant individuals who meet the normal requirements of the program regardless of immigration status. We know this will have an immediate positive impact on our communities.

HB363 seeks to continue the work done by this community by gathering relevant data on the uninsured immigrant community to help us better serve our residents by comparing options for

offering affordable healthcare coverage to State 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 due to the individual's immigration status. This bill is sound policy. It will investigate options for healthcare coverage for immigrants, many of whom, but for their immigration status, are eligible to receive care through Medicaid and other programs. We know that healthcare coverage is essential to a healthy livelihood and saves lives.¹

This committee understands the importance of common-sense legislation and the values of protecting our communities and treating all people with dignity, respect, and care. CASA urges the committee to provide a favorable report of House Bill 363.

¹ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2019/insurance-coverage-saves-lives>