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February 16, 2023

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee

BILL: HB 107 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Employers – Special Enrollment Period and Marketing

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

The Foundation is pleased to support HB 107 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Employers – Special Enrollment Period and Marketing.

HB 107 would invest \$5 million per year into a five-year outreach program to help small employers and their employees get connected with health coverage. This outreach would include education and training regarding existing coverage options, including enrolling in coverage through Maryland Health Connection, the state's online insurance marketplace, as well as options for employer-sponsored plans both on- and off- exchange. Such a marketing and outreach program would both help to reduce the overall uninsured rate in the state and support Maryland's small employers by ensuring that their employees have the coverage they need to remain healthy and productive. Health coverage also helps make employment opportunities more attractive to job seekers which is important in the current economic climate.

In addition, small businesses are more likely than large businesses to be owned by people of color and Maryland has the highest rate per-capita of businesses owned by people of color in the nation. Therefore, providing better opportunities for small businesses and nonprofits to help their employees connect with health coverage will improve health equity. The Horizon Foundation is committed to improving racial equity and eliminating all barriers that keep people from living a long, healthy life.

HB 107 will help close the gap in health coverage in our state and better connect Marylanders to the care they need.

For these reasons, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS HB 107** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.