

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with **CASA de Maryland**. I am a resident of MD District 12. **I am testifying in support of HB0363, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants.**



This bill will require the Department of Health to conduct a study comparing options for providing health insurance coverage to undocumented immigrants who would be eligible for medicaid but for their immigration status.

Access to healthcare is a human right, and it should not be limited by immigration status. Right now, undocumented immigrants in Maryland pay billions in dollars of federal and state taxes¹, but are ineligible for healthcare through Medicaid. Ineligibility for Medicaid has left over 300,000 undocumented Marylanders uninsured, which means that they then face health challenges with no support, which in many cases become life or death situations.

Additionally, providing equitable coverage for undocumented immigrants makes financial sense. Right now, undocumented patients receive care much later in the course of diseases,² which means that they face serious, and more costly, health conditions in the long run. Oftentimes undocumented immigrants rely on the emergency room again and again, which can be very expensive. Shifting from emergency care to prevention would mean that diseases are caught early and treatments could be avoided, reducing costs over time.

Opponents to this bill and ultimately to providing health insurance coverage to undocumented immigrants may claim that providing healthcare for undocumented immigrants would lead to an influx of people requesting free healthcare. The current data suggests otherwise. Since 2016, California has included undocumented children in its Medicaid coverage and has seen no increase in migration of undocumented immigrants³. European countries who have extended their healthcare coverage to migrants have also not seen any indication of “health tourism”.⁴

Today I am calling upon you, as my representative in the Maryland Legislature, to follow through on the responsibility you have to care for all of their constituents’ needs. Please vote **in support of HB0363**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erica Palmisano

5580 Vantage Point Rd, Apt 5, Columbia, MD

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ <https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-undocumented-immigrants-and-federal-health-care-benefits/>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14981600/>

³ <https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2759639>

⁴ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-we-must-not-exclude-irregular-migrants-from-health-care/>