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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 363 (SB 806)

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report (Access to Care Act Study)

Good Afternoon, Chairman Peña-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Kelly, and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present **HB 363 Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - REPORT (Access to Care Act Study)**. This bill's purpose is to ensure that all *Income-Eligible* Marylanders regardless of immigration status have the access to all health care options in our State, including plans on the Health Benefit Exchange, Medicaid programs, Children's Health Care Programs and other qualified health plans. I feel confident that this bill will change the lives of hundreds of thousands of people within this great state. These hard working people are more often than not contributing members of society who work in crucial sectors of our economy, and are taxpayers that still contribute to this state. Hard working Maryland taxpayers, yet they are unable to reap the benefits of their contributions to our Medicaid Program.

I have listened to numerous first hand accounts of real people that struggle everyday because they do not have healthcare and are unable to afford a trip to the doctors. Their lack of healthcare has affected their abilities to work and provide for their families.

Not only is providing access to health care to all people the right thing to do, it is in the interest of the State to reduce the amount it spends on uncompensated care each year. Preventive and urgent care would go a long way in reducing the utilization of emergency departments, which is often the only place these folks can get care and sometimes the cost is higher simply because they were not treated sooner.

During the 2022 session, the General Assembly, a veto proof majority passed the HB1080/SB778 Healthy babies Equity Act. This bill expanded Medicaid coverage to all pregnant people regardless of immigration status. Extending care to cover prenatal and postpartum periods dramatically increases survival rates and prevents long-term complications for the mother and baby. This was a big win for immigrant mothers and their families. However, we need to expand Medicaid coverage to all income eligible families, not just mothers and their babies.

This bill would require the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health to submit a report comparing options for offering affordable coverage to Maryland residents who are ineligible for Medicaid or Qualified Health Plans due to immigration status.

This report would compare costs to the state, identify the impact on the uninsured, potential benefit designs, and implementation considerations. With this bill we will have the information to identify the best possible healthcare policy for ALL Maryland residents.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 363 Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - REPORT (Access to Care Act Study) and I respectfully ask for your favorable report.