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SB 806

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health – Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants – Report Hearing of the House Health & Government Operations Committee

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1:00 PM

SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health and Benefits Equity Project advocates to protect and expand access to healthcare and safety net services for Marylanders struggling to make ends meet. We support policies and practices that are designed to eliminate economic and racial inequities and enable every Marylander to attain their highest level of health. **PJC strongly supports SB 806 as amended**, which would require the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health to develop a report comparing options for offering affordable health care coverage to State residents who are ineligible for Medicaid, the Maryland Children’s Health Program, qualified health plans, or stand-alone dental plans due to immigration status.

Immigration status should not be a barrier to accessing healthcare but current state and federal law prevent certain categories of immigrants from participating in the health insurance marketplace. This prohibition on coverage has impacted over 275,000 undocumented immigrants residing in Maryland. Research supports that the lack of health insurance coverage is associated with delays in care, lower rates of preventative care and increased rates of hospitalization for preventable illnesses as well as mortality.¹ SB 806 would help us better understand and meet the health needs of uninsured residents, thus enabling our state to improve health outcomes for immigrant and uninsured communities in Maryland.

For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **SB 806 as amended**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 x 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.

¹Andrea S. Christopher, et al., *Access to Care and Chronic Disease Outcomes Among Medicaid-Insured Persons Versus the Uninsured*, 106(1) AM J PUBLIC HEALTH 63 (2016), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695932/>.