

**HB 619 Commission on Universal Health Care**  
**House Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**Testimony Position: Favorable**  
**March 8, 2024**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Susan Allen, a resident of Annapolis, and a volunteer with The Maryland Poor Peoples' Campaign (MDPPC). MDPPC is a non-partisan coalition, made up of everyday Maryland citizens who are dedicated to ending poverty in our State.

The Maryland Poor Peoples' Campaign strongly supports House Bill 619 - Public Health - Commission on Health Care.

The number one cause of poverty in Maryland: inability to pay medical bills.

And poverty is the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States.

In spite of action by many non-profits and activists, too many Marylanders in need have been thrown off Medicaid in our state.

Health care is a human right and should be made available to all individuals, regardless of their ability or inability to pay, and zip code location. Universal Health Care would relieve the burden of expensive out of pocket costs for sick individuals that are eventually left unpaid and turned over to debt collection agencies. This burden can cause people to drain their life savings, negatively affect their ability to borrow (for home ownership, rentals, vehicles) and lead to poverty.

The Commission on Universal Health Care is a necessary step in bringing low-cost and comprehensive health care to all Marylanders—especially low-wealth and working residents.

With urgency, I ask you to pass HB619 immediately so that it can cross-over to the Senate for passage in the 2024 General Assembly.

Respectfully,

Susan Allen, Policy Chair of the Maryland Poor People's Campaign  
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