



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: 2/28/24
RE: HB619 - Public Health - Commission on Universal
Healthcare

The MLLC supports HB619 - Public Health - Commission on Universal Healthcare

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB619.

Establishing a commission that focuses on the benefits of universal healthcare would be advantageous for Latinos in Maryland. According to the Pew Research Center, Latino adults are less likely than other groups to have health insurance and to receive preventative medical care.¹ Systemic barriers that limit access to quality care include language and cultural barriers and higher levels of poverty.² In addition, 53% of Latinos work in jobs that put them at higher risks for health problems.³ Inaccessibility to healthcare only leads to worse health outcomes. Although the rate of uninsured Latinos decreased from 2013 to 2018, Latinos continue to be the group with the highest uninsured rate with 25% not having health insurance.⁴

HB619 will establish the Commission on Universal Health Care to determine the feasibility of establishing a State universal health care program to provide health benefits to all residents of the State through a single-payer system. The Commission will consider how to incorporate health care equity, reduce health care disparities, and increase health care access, particularly in urban and rural settings with limited access. The Commission will also consider plans, analyses, programs, and legislation in other states and consider and make recommendations on how to contain costs.

The Commission will study how the state may provide comprehensive, affordable, and high-quality publicly financed health care coverage for all residents of the state in a seamless and equitable manner, regardless of income, assets, health status citizenship or immigration status, or availability of other care coverage; and include a benefit package covering primary care, preventive care, chronic care, acute episodic care, mental health care, reproductive care, including pregnancy, birth control, and

¹ [Hispanic Americans' experiences with health care](#)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ [Latinos often lack access to healthcare and have poor health outcomes](#)

abortion services, and hospital services.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB619.