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Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I Rosenberg
Before the Finance Committee
In Support of
House Bill 718

Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission – Established

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

The federal government continues to threaten our Medicare and Medicaid funding. Last week, Medicaid funding portals shut down temporarily, leaving frightened the over 70 million Americans and over 1.5 million Marylanders who rely on the program for healthcare coverage. The following day, our new U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary could not answer basic questions about the agency during his Senate confirmation hearing. In Congressional budget talks, proposed resolutions continue to float massive cuts to our country's healthcare services funded by tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee, who has primary jurisdiction over a multitude of health programs including Medicaid, is tasked in the House Budget Committee's budget resolution to cut mandatory spending by a minimum of **880 billion dollars**. This puts not only Medicaid in jeopardy. It also threatens Medicare because 12 million Medicaid recipients also receive Medicare according to the Medicare Rights Center. As the nonprofit puts it, "Any cut to Medicaid is a cut to Medicare."

House Bill 718 would establish a watchdog commission to monitor federal changes to health insurance coverage. The commission would issue recommendations to State and local officials, ensuring that we squeeze out every last federal dollar to provide healthcare access to Marylanders. We established this same commission in 2017 when President Trump's administration performed an all-out assault on the Affordable Care Act during his first term. The commission proved effective in monitoring all successful and proposed federal cuts to the Patient Protection Program and the ACA—so much so that the commission was extended from its original deadline in 2020 to 2023 as threats of cuts persisted.

Today, The federal government's proposed cuts to our most essential healthcare programs—while it would impact everyone who utilizes Medicare and Medicaid services—would harm all of our most vulnerable communities, who take the brunt of most every government disinvestment.

House Bill 718 passed in the Health and Government Operations Committee with 18 yeas and six nay votes. On the third reader, the bill passed with 101 yeas votes. The committee amended the bill to include the Federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), which is to be monitored by the watchdog commission. Other amendments include adding the Executive Director of the Health Services Cost Review Commission and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Executive Director to the Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission.

Between impending federal cuts and our State's current budget deficit, we must enact this legislation to protect our constituents. I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 718.

Thursday, March 27