



House Bill 196 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Establishment of a State-Based Health Insurance Subsidies Program

Position: Support

The Maryland REALTORS® support HB 196 which requires the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to implement a state health care subsidies program.

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) reports that nearly 14% of REALTORS® nationwide are not covered by health insurance. Although the Maryland REALTORS® do not have specific state data on this, we believe that the percentage of uninsured in our state association is similar. That is over twice the rate of the overall uninsured population in Maryland.

The NAR study also showed that health exchanges were the third most common source of health insurance for REALTORS® (12%). The other more common sources of health coverage were a spouse's health plan (28%) and medicare (22%). About 10% were covered by private policies.

As independent contractors, most REALTORS® cannot create small employer plans which require at least two employees to be eligible. This forces many of our members to the individual market. While Maryland currently subsidizes up to 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL), some states are now looking at subsidizing up to 600% of FPL. HB 124 could increase the population receiving subsidies and cover more independent contractors who typically make too much money to receive current subsidies but not enough to make insurance easily obtainable.

For these reasons, the Maryland REALTORS® recommend a favorable report.

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