



Unitarian Legislative Ministry of Maryland

SUPPORT FOR SB 893- UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE – REVISIONS AND REQUIRED STUDY

To: Senator Delores G. Kelley and the Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Betty McGarvey Crowley and Christine Hager, Ph.D Co-Chairs, Health Task Force, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Date: March 2, 2021

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) is an advocacy organization, with members in 23 UU congregations throughout the state. Since its founding in 2005, health care issues have been a priority and we are a member of the Health Care for All Coalition. Part of the provisions of this legislation is a policy we began supporting as a priority issue in 2020.

UULM-MD supports easy enrollment in health insurance. One provision in SB893 would help people applying for unemployment insurance get connected with healthcare coverage by implementing a system through which an individual who has filed a claim for benefits may consent to sharing relevant information with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health to determine whether the individual qualifies for free or low-cost health insurance and, if so, to help the individual enroll. As you consider passage of SB 893, we ask you to support these provisions.

The Maryland Health Insurance Easy Enrollment program launched Feb. 26, 2020 as the first of its kind in the nation. The Comptroller of Maryland asked state tax filers to check a box on their state tax return if they lacked health insurance and desired that information to be shared with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. Since February: More than 41,000 filers checked the box and more than 3,700 enrolled as of July 13, 2020.

It's heartbreaking to read about the enormous increase in people filing for unemployment during the pandemic. So many Marylanders are now struggling to pay for the basics of life. Many of the newly unemployed have also lost their work-based health insurance, adding new stress and uncertainty to their lives. Health insurance coverage is particularly important now.

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We should do everything we can to make it easier for the unemployed to sign up for health insurance – to give them some security and make sure everyone has access to affordable health care in this public health crisis. Allowing people who are signing up for unemployment insurance to start the process of enrolling in health insurance through the state's insurance exchange would make it easier for people to learn about their insurance options. UULM-MD supports this easy idea to help those who are facing dire financial situations.

Thank you for considering our request for a favorable report

Betty McGarvie Crowley and Christine Hager, Ph.D., Co-Chairs, Health Task Force

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