



Empowerment. Integration. Equality.

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**Senate Finance Committee  
IN SUPPORT OF SB 893 WITH AMENDMENT  
March 2, 2021**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the state-designated Protection and Advocacy agency authorized to advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities. DRM is dedicated to advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities. This legislation is significant to people with whom we work as it impacts access to health care. Linking unemployment applications to health care information and assistance is a practical measure necessary to ensure health coverage. Consider:

Unemployment among people with disabilities has risen sharply as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

- Approximately 1 million U.S. workers with disabilities have lost their jobs since the World Health Organization proclaimed the outbreak a pandemic, according to the New Hampshire University Institute on Disability.
- 1 in 5 workers with disabilities have been dismissed from employment since the pandemic, compared with 1 in 7 in the general population, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- "People with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus and its economic consequences," said National Organization on Disability (NOD) President Carol Glazer.

During this public health crisis, it is especially important that the maximum possible number of Marylanders retain health coverage.

- Adults with disabilities are three times more likely than adults without disabilities to have heart disease, stroke, diabetes or cancer.
- People of color and people with disabilities make-up a disproportionate share of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths.
- People with developmental disorders or intellectual disabilities present with important risk factors for COVID-19 mortality, lung cancer, leukemia and lymphomas.
- By reducing barriers to health care and assisting with insurance options, more people will retain coverage allowing more access to care in appropriate primary care settings without burdening already overcrowded emergency rooms. Preventative care will be better utilized, saving health costs and consequences.

A diagnosis of a disability does not define individuals, their talents and abilities, or health behaviors. However, individuals with disabilities do experience serious health disparities.

Disparities in health care outcomes stem from structural and systemic barriers across many sectors, influenced by racism and disability discrimination.

Targeting health care access to those filing unemployment claims will help increase health care to the many groups who disproportionately experience the dual burdens of unemployment and COVID-19, especially persons of color and persons with disabilities. We urge the support of the amendment proposed by Senator Rosapepe which would create a special enrollment period for people who connect with the Health Exchange through their filing for unemployment insurance.

Access to health care is a matter of health equity.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital issues.  
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Citations for assertions in testimony available upon request.