

Rebecca Armendariz, MSW, LCSW-C
Date of Hearing: Thursday, March 11, 2021, 1:30pm
Committee: House Health and Government Operations
Sponsored by: Delegate Sheila Ruth
Bill Number: HB0470
Full Title of the Bill: Public Health – Commission on Universal Healthcare
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of HB0470, which would establish the Commission on Universal Health Care in order to develop a plan for establishing a universal program to provide health care to all Maryland residents through a single-payer system, and to seek necessary waivers to enable provision of this care.

As a licensed clinical social worker, I have served people facing illness in a hospital oncology department, and on a hospice care team. I have learned firsthand how our healthcare system punishes people who are sick. I have walked people through piles of paperwork in order to access a payment plan for health care costs, and supported people through the emotions that come with declaring bankruptcy due to medical expenses. Costs of medication and treatment are prohibitive to attaining care. This system exists in this way to bolster the profits of insurance and pharmaceutical companies and hospital systems, and to make people sicker.

The need for our state to adopt its own single-payer system is clear. We can't afford not to – the costs associated with denying people care are greater than providing it. Additionally, in Baltimore City specifically, where socially engineered conditions that contribute negatively to health are very apparent, it is not uncommon for healthcare institutions to sue low-income patients for unpaid medical expenses.

The benefits of a single-payer system, including administrative simplicity and opportunities to invest in prevention over intervention, are impossible to ignore. A state single-payer system would make an enormously positive difference in the lives of Maryland residents. It's time we began doing the work to make this possible. I urge you to vote in favor of HB0470.

Thank you,



Rebecca Armendariz, MSW, LCSW-C