

Healthcare-NOW! of Maryland

Testimony on H.B. 470 Commission on Universal Healthcare Act Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

Healthcare Now! of Maryland is a grass-roots organization that works for universal, affordable, and accessible health care through a single-payer system. We strongly support H.B. 470 and urge the committee to report favorably on this bill.

Despite the Affordable Care Act (ACA), at least 31 million Americans remain uninsured and many millions more are under-insured. During this COVID epidemic, millions of people have lost their job-related health care coverage. Many, because of financial considerations, have postponed needed medical care. The pandemic has also laid bare the startling racial disparities in the health care system. All of these issues—loss of coverage, delay in care, inequality of care—apply to Maryland.

The Commission on Universal Health Care is charged with designing a plan that provides comprehensive, affordable and high-quality publicly funded health care coverage to all Marylanders. Income, health status, assets or the availability of other health care coverage would not factor into eligibility. The benefit package would cover primary, preventive, chronic and acute episodic care and hospital services. After further analysis, the commission would decide whether additional services such as dental or vision should be added.

H.B. 470 directs the commission to create a plan that covers key issues including the incorporation of federal programs, private insurance and state, city and municipal employees into the health program. The commission is charged with setting up the health care program's operating structure, devising a benefits package, projecting the costs for the program and recommending the amounts needed and the financing mechanism. It would also apply to the federal government for all needed waivers.

The commission has a deadline of October 1, 2023 to submit a plan to establish the health care program. Maryland has the resources, the expertise and the leadership to meet that target date. The commission has a goal: to ensure that all Marylanders receive quality, affordable and accessible health care. Healthcare Now! of Maryland endorses that position and urges the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

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