Legislative Committee/Healthcare Issues Team
Columbia Democratic Club
Testimony on Public Health - Healthy Maryland Program - Establishment

HB534

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Gabriel Acevero
Committee: Health & Government Operations
Persons Submitting: Meagan Braganca, Columbia Democratic Club Legislative Chair
Position: Favorable

Chair Pendergrass & Members of the House Health & Government Operations Committee,

The Columbia Democratic Club Healthcare Team requests that you vote in favor of HB534 and move it out of Committee to establish a truly universal state-run healthcare system that provides coverage for all Marylanders.

The Columbia Democratic Club is the oldest and most active Democratic organization in Howard County, reaching more than 500 Maryland residents committed to electing Democratic candidates and advancing policy ideas.
(https://www.facebook.com/columbiademclub/)

The issue that this bill seeks to address is the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders who currently don't have health insurance, as well as the ludicrously unaffordable prices that those who do have insurance have to pay for it. In most OECD countries comparable to the US, both of these problems are unheard of. Yes, as far as these other nations are concerned, the US is one of the only ones to not have a state-run universal healthcare system that provides coverage to all for free or nearly-free at the point of service. Most other countries use taxes to provide healthcare for their citizens not just because it is the moral thing to do, but also because it is the economical thing to do: the state can provide the service of healthcare for a fraction of the price that

profit-seeking private healthcare corporations charge - and usually with better quality health outcomes, too!

While it may still be years before our federal government moves to adopt a national healthcare system, there is more than one reason why Maryland should not avoid tackling a similar initiative at the state level. This state-based approach to universal healthcare would not be unprecedented. Indeed, before Canadians had their publicly-funded national healthcare program, "Canadian Medicare," Tommy Douglas, from Saskatchewan, had to establish a local version. He launched it while Premier of Saskatchewan in 1947, covering hospitals, and it matured through 1961. This served as a model, spreading to other individual provinces before being adopted federally in 1966. (Note: Tommy Douglas is consistently voted as the "Greatest Canadian" by Canadian citizens for this grand accomplishment.)

Maryland can and should be the state that leads the way for other states and for the country to finally adopt a public healthcare system. Maryland is the wealthiest state in the union, so if anyone can afford it, it is us - though again, switching to a public healthcare system would actually *save* money. On top of this, our All Payer system makes us uniquely well-situated to make the full transition to a public healthcare system when compared to other states.

During an unprecedented global pandemic where Maryland is certainly not being spared, there is no better time to switch us to a public healthcare system - this move would not only save lives, but also countless dollars in healthcare savings, which working people need now more than ever during the current economic and healthcare crisis we find ourselves in.

Please support Public Health - Healthy Maryland Program - Establishment HB534 as written.

Thank you.

- · CDC Legislative Committee - Healthcare Issues team
- · Jake Burdett, CDC President

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