

**Testimony of Rev. Frederick K. Weimert, Vice President of the Board
of the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council
4 E. University Parkway, Baltimore, MD 21218
Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
In Support of HB 780, Maryland Health Benefit Exchange-
State-Based young Adults Health
February 18, 2021**

Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of this very important health care legislation sponsored by Delegate Kerr. The Central Maryland Ecumenical Council is a Christian organization representing many denominational judicatories across the state of Maryland. Among them are: the United Methodist, Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Disciples of Christ, United Churches of Christ, Episcopal Diocese, Society of Friends, American Baptist Churches of the South, and, as such, we have a great concern for the health of all people in our congregations and communities.

I thank the members of this body who have been so visionary in extending health care and providing prescription protection for many in Maryland. HB 780 would further extend the work that you have already done to bring affordable health care to more people in Maryland by establishing a pilot program that would provide additional State funded subsidies to bring down the cost of healthcare for young people between the ages of 18-40 who are between 138% and 400% of the poverty level. This pilot program would encourage more young people to enroll in healthcare insurance which would bring a larger pool of healthier younger people into our state insurance coverage pool lowering the cost for all. The uninsured within this age group represent a large number of minority youth who would benefit from this subsidy. It would also affect a number of young people who will be starting families.

Certainly the current pandemic has caused all of us to realize the need for everyone to have healthcare as any of us might fall ill and require hospitalization which could exhaust all of our savings.

As religious leaders in Maryland we strongly endorse this program which would aid so many of our congregants and neighbors in finding health and wholeness.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify for HB 780. We urge a favorable report.