



## Center for Salud/Health and Opportunity for Latinos

Johns Hopkins Centro SOL

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TO: Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair  
Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

**SB0728 / HB1035**

**Favorable**

FROM: Centro SOL

DATE: February 28, 2022

### **Centro SOL supports SB0728 / HB1035 Access to Care Act**

Centro SOL (Center for *Salud*/Health and Opportunity for Latinos at Johns Hopkins) is committed to promote equity in health and opportunity for Latinos by developing several patient/community-centered programs that focus on physical and mental health as well as clinical care innovations. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1035/SB0728. Note: This testimony does not necessarily represent the views of Johns Hopkins University.

While uninsured rates decreased throughout the state, Hispanics continue to have the highest uninsured rates of any racial or ethnic group within the state of Maryland. In 2019, The Kaiser Family Foundation, using the American Community Survey, reported that in Maryland 21.4 percent of Hispanics were uninsured, as compared to 3.8 percent for non-Hispanic whites.<sup>1</sup> This can be attributed in part to the systematic exclusions certain immigrants face from federal health insurance programs. Some immigrants can participate in these programs, but undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients are not eligible.

The Pew Hispanic Research Center estimates that 275,000 undocumented immigrants reside in the state of Maryland as of 2017, accounting for about 5% of Maryland's population.<sup>2</sup> Undocumented immigrants, regardless of meeting other basic eligibility requirements, are not eligible to buy health coverage from the State's Marketplace. Changing the state law to extend access to health care to immigrants who are not eligible due to status is needed to meet the health needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations and improve readiness to face health emergencies.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, expanding access to health insurance will provide an opportunity for individuals to seek timely care and reduce hospital admissions for preventable conditions. Rates of hospital admission for preventable conditions are higher among undocumented immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

This bill will require the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to establish and implement a qualified state subsidy program that mirrors subsidy eligibility and payment parameters already established for individuals that are currently eligible.

1. Kaiser Family Foundation, Uninsured Rates for the Nonelderly by Race/Ethnicity, <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/state-indicator/nonelderly-uninsured-rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&selectedRows=%7B%22states%22:%7B%22maryland%22:%7B%7D%7D%7D&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>
2. Jens Manuel Krogstad, Jeffrey S. Passel, and D'Vera Cohn, 5 Facts About Illegal Immigration in the U.S., (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, June 2019), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>
3. Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Coverage and Care for Immigrants, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, December 2017), <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants>.
4. Gusmano MK. *Undocumented immigrants in the United States: Use of health care*. Garrison, NY: The Hastings Center, 2012. Available at <http://undocumentedpatients.org/issuebrief/health-care-use/> [Google Scholar]



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- This program will expand State premium assistance and cost-sharing reductions to individuals, including minors, who meet other basic eligibility requirements already established, regardless of immigration status.
- This bill is a needed public health intervention to protect the health of one of the most vulnerable populations which will also ensure that our hospitals are able to handle emergencies by reducing hospital admissions of individuals with preventable medical conditions.

For these reasons, Centro SOL supports this bill and urges a favorable report on SB0728 / HB1035.

Signatures:

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