



**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

**SB0778 / HB1080**

**Favorable**

FROM: Centro SOL

DATE: February 28, 2022

**Centro SOL supports SB0778 / HB1080 Healthy Babies Equity Act**

Centro SOL (Center for Health and Opportunity for Latinos at Johns Hopkins) is committed to promote equity in health and opportunity for Latinos by developing community-centered programs that focus on physical and mental health as well as clinical innovations. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1080/SB0778. Note: This testimony does not necessarily represent the views of Johns Hopkins University.

A study funded by the National Institutes of Health on the effects the expansion of prenatal coverage to pregnant women regardless of immigration status in Oregon, showed increased utilization of prenatal care services among foreign born pregnant women. The study also found the mothers were more likely to follow recommended preventive health services which improved health outcomes of their infants after birth. The same study also found that a significant decrease in both the probability of extremely low birth weight infants and infant death in children born to foreign born mothers.<sup>1</sup> Lack of access to prenatal care is a factor in a range of poor health outcomes experienced by undocumented pregnant women and their babies, including higher rates of labor and delivery complications such as precipitous labor, excessive bleeding, breech presentation, cord prolapse, and fetal distress, many of these can be prevented or anticipated.<sup>2</sup>

This bill will require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide comprehensive medical care and other health care services to noncitizen pregnant women who would qualify for the Program but for their immigration status and their children up to the age of 1 year. There is evidence that expanding access to prenatal care services will not only improve women's health but also their baby's health and will have a favorable effect on the health of current and future generations.

For these reasons, Centro SOL supports this bill and urges a favorable report on SB0778 / HB1080.

Signatures:

Joshua M. Sharfstein, MD

Vice Dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement

Director, Bloomberg American Health Initiative



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1. Swartz, Jonas J et al. "Expanding Prenatal Care to Unauthorized Immigrant Women and the Effects on Infant Health." *Obstetrics and gynecology* vol. 130,5 (2017): 938-945. doi:10.1097/AOG.0000000000002275
2. Reed, M.M., Westfall, J.M., Bublitz, C. *et al.* Birth outcomes in Colorado's undocumented immigrant population. *BMC Public Health* 5, 100 (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-5-100>