



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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**Testimony of Larry Stafford, Jr., Executive Director of Progressive Maryland
SB 778 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Children and Pregnant Women
Healthy Babies Equity Act
March 8, 2022**

Position: Favorable

To Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 778. Progressive Maryland is a statewide grassroots organization with over 100,000 members, supporters, and affiliates who live in nearly every legislative district across the state. Our mission is to improve the lives of working people and families in Maryland.

Please note Progressive Maryland’s strong support for SB 778, the Healthy Babies Equity Act. This legislation would expand eligibility for prenatal and postpartum care through Medicaid to cover all pregnant people, regardless of their immigration status. Undocumented Marylanders are currently ineligible for this critical coverage, which plays an enormous role in ensuring the health of both mothers and their children.

Insufficient access to prenatal care dramatically increases the risks of premature birth, serious delivery complications, and both maternal & infant mortality. Undocumented immigrants in Maryland already face numerous barriers to healthcare including linguistic obstacles, inability to take time off from work, and fear of legal repercussions for receiving health care services. These factors and many others contribute to growing health disparities that are harming our undocumented communities. Expanding Medicaid services to include prenatal and postnatal care for all pregnant people is an important first step toward greater health equity in Maryland.

Already, seventeen states offer Medicaid coverage for prenatal and postpartum care regardless of the recipient’s immigration status. The working people of Maryland are calling on our representatives in the General Assembly to implement this coverage here. **We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 778.**

Larry Stafford, Jr.
Executive Director
Progressive Maryland