



SB 632: Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program

Good afternoon, Members of the Finance Committee

My name is Rick Weldon, I'm the President/CEO of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce and the Vice President of the Maryland Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.

It's in that capacity that I'm here today, to encourage you to support SB 632.

We support Senator Hester's proposed solution to create a new incentive for small businesses and nonprofits to instead purchase health insurance from the MD Health Benefits Exchange.

Hundreds of small businesses would benefit from this bill by allowing the owners to offer health plans to their employees, which would then build loyalty between the worker and the business owners, while also increasing the number of covered lives AND expanding the reach of our Exchange. Further, nothing about this incentive undermines our carefully-crafted Small Group marketplace, something I know is important to this Committee.

Our small businesses across Maryland have been battered by the pandemic. Now, they're facing new challenges resulting from trying to rebuild a workforce. Senate Bill 632 will directly address that challenge, while expanding the number of working people who will be able to join the ranks of the insured in Maryland.

I had the good fortune to serve on the House Health and Government Operations committee from 2003-2009. During that time, I worked with members of this Committee to expand access to health insurance and to build one of the best small group markets in the Nation. I'm proud to continue that work as a Chamber executive, and commit to continuing that work in the years to come.

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, I urge a favorable report on SB 632, and thank Senator Hester for her sponsorship.