



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

2600 ST. PAUL STREET BALTIMORE, MD 21218

P: (410)235-9000

F: (410)235-8963

WWW.HEALTHCAREFORALL.COM

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 778

Maryland Medical Assistance Program-Children and Pregnant Women (Healthy Babies Equity Act)  
Before the Senate Finance Committee

By Vinny DeMarco, Deputy Director Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.

March 2, 2022

Chairman Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 778. We especially thank Senator Lam for sponsoring the bill.

It is our mission to achieve access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. While the state has recently made historic gains in health insurance coverage,<sup>1</sup> Black and Latino consumers remain disproportionately represented among the uninsured.<sup>2</sup> Immigration status can be a significant barrier to coverage.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of coverage, they remain reliant on safety net clinics and hospitals for care and often go without needed care.

In Maryland, 6% of births were to people who had received late or no prenatal care in 2020.<sup>4</sup> Prenatal and postpartum care are transformative, especially in communities of color, in preserving and protecting the lives of children and their mothers.

Senate Bill 778 would expand the eligibility requirements for prenatal care in the Medicaid program to all pregnant women and their children, regardless of immigration status. This legislation would cover care throughout a woman's pregnancy, and twelve months postpartum for both the mother and child. Eliminating immigration status as a barrier to enrollment in Medicaid would improve maternal and child health outcomes.

According to the Urban Institute, there are currently seventeen states that have expanded coverage and provide this type of prenatal care to undocumented pregnant immigrants.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to your leadership, Maryland has remained at the forefront of influential health care policy and systemic change, and Senate Bill 778 will help us continue to lead the way. We urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 778.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.marylandhbe.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Feb.-28-OE-Extension-Press-Release.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/265041/trends-in-the-us-uninsured.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/ViewTopic.aspx?reg=24&top=5&lev=0&slev=4#:~:text=In%20Maryland%20in%202020%2C%2075.1,late%20or%20no%20prenatal%20care>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/public-health-insurance-landscape-pregnant-and-postpartum-women>