

# Testimony in Support of HB610

## Public Health - Commission on Universal Health Care

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As a resident of Wicomico County, MD, and a Salisbury City Council member, I am writing to express my support for HB610, which would establish a Commission on Universal Healthcare. This commission would develop a plan for a state universal healthcare program that would provide health benefits to all Maryland residents through a single-payer system.

My family has had more than our fair share of medical emergencies, and we've been fortunate enough that my husband's employer provides a means to purchase health insurance. In recent years, however, my husband's health has taken some big hits that will be with him for the rest of his life. These debilitating health issues have been a struggle, as has the knowledge that if he were to stop working because of his disabilities, we would lose our health coverage for the entire family, each of whom has their own disabilities and relies on frequent doctor or specialist visits and medications.

I represent a district filled with people facing these same issues. Many work jobs that do not even offer health insurance, and when they do, the coverage costs are out of reach for most. Between plan premiums that run in the hundreds of dollars, to deductibles, some as much as \$10,000, it's still far out of reach for too many.

In addition to helping average Maryland families, his bill would also help municipalities cut costs. Salisbury offers employees health coverage, spending \$3.7 million dollars a year covering both current and retired employees, while Worcester County budgets nearly ten times that amount. If the state were to create a universal health coverage plan, that burden would be lifted from our city, and many other municipalities and counties around the state.

A single-payer system would enable patients to receive the care they need in the most appropriate venue, control costs for everyone, and ultimately provide better health outcomes for Maryland residents.

I am asking the General Assembly to set up a Kirwan-like commission for healthcare that would consider plans and analyses done in other states on how to:

1. ensure all Marylanders, regardless of income, assets, health status, citizenship or immigration status, or availability of other health care coverage will have access to quality affordable healthcare;

2. include a benefit package which covers primary & preventive care, chronic care, acute episodic care, reproductive care, including pregnancy, birth control, and abortion services, and hospital services;
3. centralize equity as a goal of the plan in order to reduce health care disparities; and
4. increase health care access in underserved urban and rural settings.

As we continue to deal with the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, Marylanders need you now more than ever to take the first step in becoming a national leader in healthcare. I urge a favorable report with no weakening amendments on HB610.