



Testimony on HB1035
Access to Care Act
Position: FAVORABLE

Madam Chair and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Given the need for every Marylander to have the ability to seek out medical coverage if they need, require or want medical assistance, we support HB1035 to expand healthcare coverage to immigrant communities in Maryland.

Although the Affordable Care Act allowed a monumental increase in terms of healthcare coverage for many Maryland families, this unfortunately did not apply to many immigrant families, including over 275,000 immigrants that are undocumented in Maryland. The Access to Care Act would change this by ensuring that all income-eligible Marylanders can purchase coverage through the exchange, regardless of their citizenship status. To this extent, the Act also establishes a state subsidy program to ensure that all new individuals who apply for Medicaid would have the appropriate funding to receive care.

In a time where many families, no matter the citizenship status, are contracting COVID and facing other healthcare disparities, allowing more families to become insured would only help to decrease the number of contractions and sick Marylanders in general. Suffering from COVID or other healthcare disparities not only impacts the sick individual, but both family and entire communities. For example, many immigrant families who have young children, often rely on the sole income of both parents to make ends meet. In this regard, if both parents contract COVID or experience healthcare disparities, it puts the lives of their kids at risk as well.

For 1199SEIU members, majority of whom are essential workers and individuals who also come from immigrant backgrounds, this legislation is pivotal for two reasons. First, our members understand that by increasing the number of insured individuals also means less of a burden and strain on the healthcare system, as well as healthcare workers themselves who are currently overworked. While we have hospitals that are currently overflowing, any step to provide individuals with healthcare coverage to alleviate this strain would benefit both our hospital resources and improve patient care. Second, our members come from immigrant

families themselves. They know the benefits of what health insurance can do to change the lives of immigrant families and believe that without health insurance, it leaves many Marylanders to a life of increased mortality and family destruction.

For these reasons, we ask this Committee to give a favorable report to report on HB1035: Access to Care Act.

Respectfully,

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