



TESTIMONY FOR SB0632
Maryland Health Benefit Exchange - Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program

Bill Sponsor: Senator Hester

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0632 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

The goal of this legislation is to broaden the number of people in Maryland who have health insurance. Many Marylanders work for small businesses or small non-profit employers who do not have the resources to offer health coverage. Only 37% of small employers offer health coverage to their employees compared to 95% of large employers.

This leaves a lot of workers with no health coverage. This bill would invest \$45 million/year into a five-year state subsidy program for small businesses and nonprofits with fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees so they can offer their employees health coverage through the Maryland Health Connection. Additionally, \$3 million/year would be allocated for outreach to notify small employers about the new program. The funding for the program will be made available from federal funds, so no state money is required.

This would help a lot of small businesses compete more successfully for employees against larger businesses, and against our neighbors in Virginia and D.C., since health coverage is a very large determining factor for prospective employees. It would also allow a lot more Marylanders to afford health coverage, which will result in better health outcomes.

Our members think this is a tremendous opportunity for their fellow Marylanders. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.