

## **Testimony in Support of HB1035**

Health Insurance - Qualified Resident State Subsidy Program (Access to Care Act)

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Submitted by Sosseh Prom

March 1, 2022

Dear Committee Members:

I hope this message finds you well and thank you for accepting and considering written testimony regarding House Bill 1035. African Communities Together (ACT) is in strong support of HB1035, the Access to Care Act. ACT is a national nonprofit dedicated towards improving the lives of African immigrants in the United States, and empowers African immigrants to integrate socially, advance economically and engage civically. ACT also connects these immigrants to critical services that can help them not only survive, but thrive in their new home.

ACT supports HB1035 because we believe healthcare is a human right, and not a privilege that should only be accessible to a select few. With the advent of COVID-19, Black and Brown families, immigrants in particular, have found themselves severely disadvantaged and unable to access the care they need to survive. For many, lack of healthcare coverage during a global health crisis has resulted in medical debt that has added to the already stressful burdens of job loss, housing instability, and food insecurity. For others, the option of obtaining affordable healthcare is so far removed from reality that they would rather suffer in silence. In Maryland, over 275K undocumented immigrants are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Exchange. Multiple states have established comprehensive care programs to extend coverage to immigrants regardless of their immigration status. This has had the highest impact on Black and Latino residents, who have become sicker, hospitalized at higher rates, and die younger as they are forced to face life or death situations due to their exclusion in programs such as the Affordable Care Act.

We strongly support the passage of HB1035 because it would open up the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (ACA Coverage) to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility, regardless of immigration status. This bill would also create a subsidy program with the funds necessary to cover new enrollees. The Access to Care Act is a step toward ending

healthcare disparities for immigrant communities in Maryland. It would ensure access to primary care, resulting in higher early detection rates and better long-term management of chronic diseases and serious illnesses. It would decrease the amount of costly emergency room visits and mortality rates. We strongly urge this Committee to pass HB1035 and provide vulnerable groups with the resources they need to survive and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sosseh Prom', is written over a horizontal line.

**Sosseh Prom, Esq.**

She/Her/Hers

State Policy Manager, African Communities Together

Cell: 202-834-3595

Email: [sosseh@africans.us](mailto:sosseh@africans.us)