



Testimony on HB 610

Public Health-Commission on Universal Health Care

Position: FAVORABLE

March 8, 2022

To Chair Pendergrass and the House Health & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Malcolm Bates, and I submit this testimony on behalf of Progressive Maryland. Progressive Maryland is a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization promoting racial, social, economic, and environmental justice. With over 120,000 individual members, supporters, and organizational affiliates statewide, we are leading the fight for progressive change in Maryland through grassroots organizing, public education, and legislative advocacy. I write this testimony in support of House Bill 694, which establishes a Commission on Universal Healthcare that will develop a plan for a state-level single-payer health care system, one that provides healthcare for all Maryland residents.

Since the expansion of Medicaid there has been a significant decrease in the rate of the uninsured and there are major gaps in health care access. Deductibles and out of pocket expenses create barriers for Marylanders who are insured from receiving the health care and treatment they need. Almost 6% of Marylanders are still uninsured, and Marylanders living in or near poverty are almost three times as likely to be uninsured.

Increasing access to health care will lower costs for the state and create better health outcomes for all Marylanders. Without routine access to primary and preventive care, the uninsured are often diagnosed at more advanced stages of disease and, even after being diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care. This further perpetuates health disparities which disproportionately affect communities of color. Unfortunately, when uninsured Marylanders are forced to utilize emergency

departments to access primary care services, there is a corresponding increase in costs to the state for uncompensated and undercompensated care.

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.

We all want our family and ourselves to be healthy and stay healthy, when needed, and our current for-profit health care system doesn't prioritize that. There are many who still don't have insurance, and many people who have health insurance still cannot afford to use it because of expensive co-pays. We need a system that provides healthcare, not health insurance.

Polls consistently show that a majority of Americans support Medicare for All, and in February 2022 the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) issued a report acknowledging the serious problems in our current system and concluded that a single-payer, government-sponsored medical system will have positive effects on workers, communities, and the economy..

I urge a favorable report, with no weakening amendments, on HB610.

Malcolm Bates

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