



## Testimony on HB 610

### Public Health - Commission on Universal Health Care

Position: **FAVORABLE**

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

As a resident of Montgomery County and on behalf of Our Revolution Maryland, I write to express our support for HB610, and the establishment of a **Commission on Universal Healthcare** which develops a plan for universal healthcare coverage in Maryland through a single-payer system.

Medicaid expansion in Maryland has led to a significant decrease in the number of uninsured residents. Nevertheless, nearly 6% of Marylanders do not have healthcare coverage. Impoverished and struggling residents - who are disproportionately Black and Brown - are by far the most likely to be uninsured. Even those with some form of health insurance often face barriers to care. For many, deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses are unaffordable obstacles. Others - especially those in rural communities - may find it challenging simply to travel to a doctor's office or hospital

Based on the experiences of other industrialized countries, guaranteeing access to health care reduces *per capita* healthcare expenses significantly and leads to better healthcare outcomes. This is also the case in the United States for those who enjoy some form of single payer care including; 1) those in the military, 2) retirees from service retirees, and 3) seniors covered by Medicare.

By contrast, the uninsured who, due to the expense and inconvenience, rarely seek preventive care treatment are often diagnosed at more advanced stages of disease. Even after diagnosis, they generally receive less therapeutic care.

It is important to note that when uninsured Marylanders are forced to utilize emergency departments to access primary care services, taxpayers must cover the costs.

In a single-payer system, patients receive the care they need in the most appropriate venue. This reduces total costs and generates significantly better outcomes.

I am asking the General Assembly to set up a Kirwan-like Commission for Healthcare to formulate a plan that :

1. Ensures all Marylanders access to quality affordable healthcare.
2. includes 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. Reduces healthcare outcomes across class, race, and income lines.
4. Increases 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.

Sincerely,

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