



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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**Testimony of Larry Stafford, Jr., Executive Director of Progressive Maryland
HB1035 – Health Insurance – Qualified Resident State Subsidy Program
Access to Care Act
March 3, 2022**

Position: Favorable

To Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 1035. Progressive Maryland is a statewide grassroots organization with over 100,000 members, supporters, and affiliates who live in nearly every legislative district across the state. Our mission is to improve the lives of working people and families in Maryland.

Please note Progressive Maryland's support for HB1035, the Access to Care Act. This legislation would open the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, our state's Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance marketplace, to all who meet the regular eligibility criteria, regardless of immigration status. It would also establish a state subsidy program to ensure additional funding is available to supplement the cost of new enrollees.

Under current law, undocumented Marylanders do not qualify for Medicaid or Medicare coverage, and they are ineligible to enroll in ACA plans, leaving them with very limited healthcare options. Unless they are able to afford the prohibitive out-of-pocket costs of care, they are left to rely on employer-sponsored coverage (rare, as undocumented immigrants are often employed in low-wage jobs where employers are less likely to offer healthcare benefits) or community health clinics (which tend to offer a limited range of services).

At Progressive Maryland, we believe single-payer healthcare is the best solution to the extreme health disparities and injustice in this country's healthcare system, and we will continue to advocate for the single-payer model. But the pandemic has underscored the urgency of ensuring undocumented immigrants, who already face numerous barriers to healthcare, have greater options and access. This bill will allow them to enroll in plans under the Affordable Care Act sooner rather than later. For this reason, **we respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB1035.**

Larry Stafford, Jr.
Executive Director
Progressive Maryland