

**Testimony in Support of HB610**  
**Public Health - Commission on Universal Health Care**  
**March 10, 2022**

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I'm a resident of Montgomery County and a member of Progressive Maryland's Healthcare Task Force. I write to express my support for HB610, a piece of legislation that would establish a Commission on Universal Healthcare. This Commission would develop a plan for a state universal healthcare program that provides health benefits to all Maryland residents through a single-payer system.

As a retired physician, I have been keenly aware of the failures of our current healthcare system. I'm confident that a single-payer system is the best solution to address the health disparities and poor health outcomes this corporatized, profit-driven system produces. There are major gaps in health care access in our state, and even Marylanders with insurance coverage face significant barriers to care created by high deductibles and prohibitive out-of-pocket expenses.

A single-payer system would enable patients to receive the care they need without fear of bankruptcy, control costs for everyone, and ultimately provide better health outcomes for Maryland residents. Without routine access to primary and preventive care, the uninsured are often diagnosed at more advanced stages of disease and tend to receive less therapeutic care. This further perpetuates health disparities that 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.

I urge the General Assembly to establish a Commission for Universal Healthcare that would study how to ensure all Marylanders — regardless of income, assets, health status, citizenship or immigration status — receive quality healthcare that covers primary & preventive care; chronic care; acute episodic care; reproductive care, including pregnancy, birth control, and abortion services; hospital services; long-term care; and other health services.

Please issue a favorable report with no weakening amendments on HB610.

Sincerely,

Lila McConnell, MD