

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

Dear Chair Pendergrass and members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

I am a resident of Montgomery County and a strong supporter of HB610. This bill would establish a Commission on Universal Healthcare to develop a plan for a state single-payer health care system to provide health care for all Maryland residents.

No matter what our background or income, we all want our family and ourselves to be healthy and, when needed, to receive timely and quality healthcare. This is not the priority of our current for-profit health care system. Even people with “good” insurance are not always able to access the care they need. Many people who have health insurance cannot afford to use it. We need a system that provides healthcare, not health insurance.

As a community health nurse with over 40 years of working with all types of families, I saw the stress people experienced due to confusing paperwork; denials of needed treatments; losing a provider when the insurance plan changed; unaffordable premiums and copays; and making career and other life decisions based on employer provided insurance. I also saw people put off needed care and medications because they were unable to pay for it. Healthcare in our country is much more expensive than most other countries yet we have some of the worst health outcomes.

We can change this in Maryland by implementing a single-payer, government run, not-for-profit system, which would decrease costs and improve health outcomes. Polls show that the majority of Americans support such a system. In February 2022, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) issued a report acknowledging the serious problems of our current system and concluded that a single-payer, government sponsored medical system would have positive effects on our economy, benefit workers, and increase longevity.

Maryland can be a leader in the nation to find solutions for our broken health care system. The plan should include broad coverage for all health care needs, including primary and preventive care, mental health, specialty care, hospital care, and home services — as well as dental, vision, and hearing benefits. It should be provided for all residents, no exceptions, and reduce disparities based on where people live, their income, education, or race.

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

Shayne Dizard, BSN, RN, MS
Progressive Maryland Healthcare Task Force