

Dear Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes and Health and Government Operations Committee Members,

We, the undersigned organizations, community leaders, and elected officials in your district, The Shore, and around the state are proud to announce our support for Delegate Sheila Ruth's HB 0329 Commission on Universal Health Care bill and ask that you also co-sponsor and support this common-sense legislation.

What is the Commission on Universal Health Care?

HB0329 would establish the Commission on Universal Health Care: a Kirwin Commission-style body whose express purpose is to research and develop a plan for the State to establish a universal health care program that covers all Maryland residents. The plan is non-committal and its implementation would be voted on in a later bill.

Why is it necessary?

Health inequities based on race, ethnicity, disability, economic status, and place of residence persist throughout the state and the COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened them. The need to address and improve health outcomes in underserved areas of our state is imperative, especially when people with chronic conditions are less able to get the care and treatment they desperately need.

Many Maryland workers and their dependents lost their healthcare in layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The current healthcare system does not ease burdens on Marylanders and is not enough to address the increasing health concerns of modern life. All Marylanders should have the right to preventative care and comprehensive health care regardless of assets, employment status, race, ethnicity, zip code, citizenship or immigration status.

What's wrong with the current approach?

For most Marylanders, the costs of health care are daunting. Emergency room visits and prescription drug prices are costly enough, but when surveying the costs of health care plans it becomes entirely clear that our healthcare system is unaffordable, broken and immoral.

According to a study by the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation in 2022, Insurance premiums in Maryland have an average premium of \$439. Due to these costs and other inequalities in our healthcare system, 257,100 or 4.3% of the State's population are still uninsured with thousands more under insured. With this legislation, we can finally identify a way to create a healthcare system where everyone is insured and nobody is left behind.

What's the solution?

We need a Kirwan style commission on Healthcare to determine how we can ensure every Marylander has healthcare. A state single-payer system would resolve the health care and employment barrier, and "produce savings of about 18 percent" according to researchers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. A state single-payer system would:

- Shrink net health care spending for middle income families between 2.6 – 9.1%.

- Save employers with fewer than 500 employees between 5.7 and 22% in healthcare costs as a share of payroll.
- Benefit small businesses who are already providing healthcare to their workers.
- Meet the needs of low income communities and reduce challenges faced by minorities.

We, the undersigned organizations, community leaders, and elected officials are your constituents, and we ask that you stand with us by supporting this bill and help to get it passed this session.

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Chair, Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Cecilia Plante
Maryland Legislative Coalition

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Our Revolution Maryland

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