



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Favor of SB 806- Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health – Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants -- Report

To: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair and Members of the  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
From: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate, Immigration,  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
Date: March 30, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 806, Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health – Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants -- Report

I encourage you to vote in favor of this bill.

Our undocumented immigrant neighbors make significant contributions to the national and Maryland economies by working in essential jobs, particularly during the pandemic, paying income taxes, Social Security and Medicare FICA contributions in excess of \$4 billion annually. However, due to their status as undocumented immigrants, they are currently ineligible for Medical Assistance, the MD Children's Health Program and the MD Health Benefit Exchange—even though many of them would otherwise qualify—making them and their families susceptible to illnesses and diseases that in the long run without care may threaten our public safety. With the requested report, I am sure, we can begin to correct this inequity by ensuring that our immigrant neighbors have access to health insurance provided through the mentioned programs.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, non-citizens are significantly more likely than citizens to be uninsured. In 2019, among the non-elderly population, 25% of lawfully present immigrants and more than four in ten (46%) undocumented immigrants were uninsured compared to less than one in ten (9%) citizens. Among citizen children, those with at least one non-citizen parent are more likely to be uninsured compared to those with citizen parents (9% vs. 5%)

Access to affordable health care is a right not to be denied because of immigration status. The health of all of us, in all our communities is at stake.

I share my faith with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists in Maryland who are called to promote and affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relations and as such, I urge you to provide equitable access to health care for all Marylanders, including our immigrant neighbors by voting in favor of SB 806.

Thank you.

Sources:

American Immigration Council,

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland>

Kaiser Family Foundation

<https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-and-care-of-undocumented-immigrants/>

*Yours in faith and justice,*

*Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate, Immigration, UU Legislative Ministry of MD*