

Public Health - Commission on Universal Health Care

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Ruth

Committee: Health & Government Operations

Organization Submitting: N/A

Person Submitting: Megan Outten, Salisbury City Councilmember

Position: FAVORABLE

I, Megan Outten, am writing to express my support for HB0329, which would establish a Commission on Universal Health Care in Maryland.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the disparities in our healthcare system are more apparent now than ever. Rural communities and low-income households have felt the brunt of the pandemic's health and economic impacts. As a resident of Wicomico County, a rural county where nearly 14% of its residents exist in poverty, I have witnessed these impacts first-hand.

Residents across the Lower Eastern Shore face daily challenges in order to access necessary healthcare services, resulting in many having to travel four to five hours round-trip to visit Annapolis or Baltimore for the care they need. The cost then becomes more than the medical visit: it's the gas to get there, the food you need to eat along the way, the potential hotel stay if you're receiving long-term treatment, and more. These are costs that add up over time, and when over 45% of households on the Lower Shore are already struggling, the financial burden is too great.

This is why it is now more important than ever to ensure that every Maryland resident has comprehensive healthcare, regardless of their income, race, gender, or geographic location.

The Commission on Universal Health Care would be an important step towards achieving this goal. It would bring together stakeholders from across the state, including healthcare providers, insurers, policymakers, and advocates, to identify a comprehensive plan for implementing universal healthcare in Maryland.

This bill will represent a chance to bring us more information, to fully understand the issues residents of Maryland are facing, and to make an informed decision on a plan that could help to ensure all Maryland residents have access to the healthcare services they deserve.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Health and Government Operations Committee to give a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on HB0329 and establish a Commission on Universal Health Care in Maryland. This is a critical step towards achieving a healthcare system that is accessible, affordable, and equitable for all residents of the State of Maryland.