

Date of Hearing: February 23, 2023

Marjorie Simon  
Pikesville, Maryland 21208

**Testimony on HB0588- Position: Favorable with Amendments**

**Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)**

**TO:** Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

**FROM:** Marjorie Simon

My name is Marjorie Simon. I am a resident of District 11. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments of HB0588,, the Access to Care Act.

I am a member of Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Pikesville, Maryland, Since 2017 our Gemilut Hasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) committee has worked with Gilead House, a program of ERICA (Episcopal Refugee and Immigrant Center Alliance) and St. Marks on the Hill Church in Pikesville. Gilead House provides housing and other support for people seeking asylum.

One young man I was helping would get sick periodically with what we thought was a stomach virus. After the third or fourth occurrence we convinced him to seek medical care. It was cost prohibitive for him, as an uninsured individual without eligibility for Medicaid or the ACA, to seek care except at a Federally Qualified Health Center. The only reasonably close place that we knew of where he could get cared for in Baltimore County was Chase Brexton Health Care in Randallstown. Before he could make an appointment with a doctor, however, he had to be approved for reduced cost care which delayed him making a doctor's appointment for several weeks. Fortunately, his situation was not an emergency, though it did turn out to be a serious infection that required two courses of antibiotics. If he had had medical insurance he could have received care more quickly.

Newcomers to this country have often suffered trauma and may come from countries with inadequate medical care. They need good primary care. Without access to affordable insurance, the likelihood increases that they will be forced to come to the emergency room for medical care that could have been handled in the community before there was a health crisis.

The Access to Care Act with amendments will give newcomers to this country, regardless of their immigration status, the ability to purchase affordable health insurance. It is in all of our interests to help keep our neighbors healthy and out of the emergency rooms. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on HB0588..