



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: HB0588 – Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 23, 2023

Bill Contact: Delegate Bonnie Cullison

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with members in all districts in Montgomery County as well as several neighboring counties. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all Maryland residents healthy, and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. HB0588, the Access to Care Act, addresses critical health disparities faced by the immigrant community in Maryland by expanding the Affordable Care Act to Marylanders who meet the regular eligibility criteria, regardless of their immigration status. This bill also begins to establish a state subsidy program to ensure that newly covered individuals have the funding to receive care.

According to a May 2022 report by La Clinica del Pueblo, 225,00 to 275,000 Maryland residents remain ineligible for public or privately owned health insurance due to their immigration status. Immigrants support Maryland's economy across sectors: they make up nearly a third of all Maryland health care support workers and more than a third of the state's building maintenance workers and groundskeepers. Immigrants in Maryland contributed \$139 million in taxes last year.

Because many uninsured people avoid seeking medical care unless they face an emergency and delay care until their symptoms become intolerable, they are less likely to receive a diagnosis in the early stages of a disease and more likely to suffer complications from aggravated medical conditions. The combination of the pandemic, restrictive access to health care, and fear-inducing immigration policies leaves immigrants vulnerable to healthcare inaccessibility.

For all these reasons, DTMG strongly supports HB0588, and we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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