

Dear Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am a resident of District 46 and am submitting this testimony with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland. **I am testifying in support of passing HB05588, the Access to Care Act, with amendments.** This bill:



- Opens up the MD Health Benefits Exchange (ACA Coverage) to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility, regardless of their immigration status;
- Establishes a State Subsidy Program to ensure newly covered individuals have the funding to receive care;
- Requires the state to submit a state innovation waiver (under 1332 of the Affordable Care Act) to allow MD to make this change to eligibility; and
- Provides (as amended) that any newly qualified set of individuals get the same subsidy as anyone who is currently covered.

Currently, over 275,000 undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Exchange – and they still need health care, just like the rest of us. **When residents lack health care, we ALL absorb costs associated with emergency treatments and untreated health problems that fester and create hardship for individuals and families over time.** The Access to Care Act would open the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (ACA Coverage) to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility, regardless of their immigrant status.

Our state and communities become stronger and more resilient when we expand health care coverage. Benefits of expanded coverage include:

- Increased access to primary care physicians that results in earlier detection of health problems and more stable long-term management of chronic diseases; this decreases the number of people who die at earlier ages from preventable causes.
- Greater access to primary care clinics and medical practices that results in reduced use of emergency departments; this decreases wait times in emergency departments, increases access for those who require emergency medical attention, and reduces the cost of emergency care for all of us.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of passing HB0588 (Access to Care Act) with amendments.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Liz Simon-Higgs

308 E Randall Street, Baltimore, MD 21230

Showing Up for Racial Justice - Baltimore