

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 111

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Before the Health and Government Operations Committee

By Steve Raabe, President, OpinionWorks LLC

February 7, 2023

Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 111.

My name is Steve Raabe. I am a resident of Annapolis, and President of OpinionWorks, a public opinion research firm.

I would like to speak to the provision in this bill that would automatically establish a program to enroll people in Medicaid and the Maryland Children's Health Program based on SNAP eligibility.

I would like to share observations from past focus group work we undertook for the Maryland Citizens Health Initiative to understand remaining barriers to coverage facing people who qualify for free or low-cost healthcare but who do not apply.

I would like to speak to the mindset and barriers that we heard. Observations made by uninsured Marylanders in that inquiry, I would suggest, may also be relevant to HB111.

Participants in that study were clear they would be more likely to have health coverage if barriers to entry were removed. For example, in that project we tested the possibility of signing up for health coverage at the same time and place people apply for unemployment benefits, and participants were excited about that idea.

Let me give you just two of the most important barriers uninsured Marylanders cited.

1. Fear of an onerous application process: People admitted that their perception of a difficult process keeps them from even getting started. One person said.

*I am definitely one of those people when something seems like it is taking a little bit too long, or I hit a speed bump...sometimes I get a little discouraged and I might just go into a totally different direction.*

2. Just don't know the process – or don't know they're eligible: One said,

*I don't know if you need to apply or what are the requirements to apply. I wanted to apply and I should have done research to find out more about it. I really don't know that part.*

Based on this research, I can say confidently that this bill effectively removes key barriers to health coverage for uninsured Marylanders and will result in broader coverage.

Thank you.