



# Indivisible: Central Maryland

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## TESTIMONY FOR HB0588

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

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Cullison et al

**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee

**Organization Submitting:** Indivisible Central Maryland

**Person Submitting:** Liz Enagonio, Lead Advocate

**Position:** FAVORABLE

My name is Liz Enagonio, representing both myself and Indivisible Central Maryland, a grassroots organization of constituents dedicated to protecting progressive and democratic values. Indivisible Central Maryland **strongly supports HB0588**.

You have seen and heard other testimony that lays out the facts: that more than 275,000 undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for health care through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE). Let me note that some DOCUMENTED immigrants remain ineligible as well. One of the immigrants I work with through my volunteer group Asylum Helpers has been granted asylum, but remains ineligible to access any government programs, including medical care through the MHBE, even though he has a work permit, a job, and pays Federal, State, and social security taxes.

But allow me to tell the tragic story of the brother-in-law of this same man. In March of 2021, the brother-in-law sustained a traumatic brain injury after falling down a flight of unlighted concrete stairs in his home here in Maryland. Our volunteer organization, Asylum Helpers, was able to aid him in applying for Medicaid to cover his hospitalization at UMD Shock Trauma, where he had surgery to relieve pressure on his brain, followed by a second surgery to replace a section of his skull after the swelling decreased. However, the emergency Medicaid ended three months after he was released from the hospital. Because he is undocumented, he now has no medical coverage for this serious injury that has lifelong aftereffects. He has no provider to follow the aftermath of the brain injury nor to prescribe and fill necessary medications. Two weeks ago, he had onset of grand mal seizures, and was hospitalized for almost a week. He is now unable to drive or work. Had this young man been able to receive the ongoing care he needed, he would still be a productive member of our community, working and able to provide for his wife and two young children. And it remains unclear whether he can obtain emergency Medicaid coverage again, potentially leaving this low-income family with enormous and unpayable medical bills.

HB0588 addresses exactly these health disparities faced by immigrants such as this undocumented young man by expanding the Affordable Care Act to all Marylanders who meet the regular eligibility, regardless of their immigration status. HB0588 also establishes a State Subsidy Program to ensure newly covered individuals have the funding to receive care.

**On behalf of our valued immigrant community, Indivisible Central Maryland STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB0588 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee. Thank you.**