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HB0329

March 16, 2023

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 329 – Public Health - Commission on Universal Health Care
POSITION: Support

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 329.

HB 329 establishes the Commission on Universal Health Care to develop a plan for universal health care for all Maryland residents through a single-payer system. The Commission on Universal Health Care would be an important first step toward ensuring that all Maryland residents have access to health care.

Despite Maryland's financing systems of global hospital budgets and rate-setting for hospital services, almost 6.5 percent of Maryland residents remained uninsured in 2021.¹ Lack of health insurance is a leading barrier to health care access, resulting in uninsured persons being less likely to receive important preventive health care services such as blood pressure checks, blood sugar testing, mammograms, and colon cancer screening.² Early and consistent access to preventative health care reduces the risk for disease, disability, and death – not to mention the cost-savings that would result from more people utilizing preventive health care services.^{3,4} Universal health care through a single-payer system would provide all Marylanders with access to health care services. The single-payer approach would also allow for healthcare savings state-wide through lower administrative costs, simplified billing, and lower drug costs.⁵

Increasing the proportion of US adults who receive preventive health care is a primary goal of the US Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2030 Framework. So far, there has been little or no detectable change since baseline data was collected in 2015. Establishing the Commission proposed in this bill could be the first step in Maryland leading the way to meeting this national goal. Some states, such as Washington and Oregon, have created commissions and task forces charged with developing state plans for universal health care systems.^{6,7} Passing HB 329 would bring Maryland into the ranks of these trailblazing states.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 329.

¹ [Health insurance status Maryland population 2021 | Statista](#)

² [The Uninsured and the ACA: A Primer – Key Facts about Health Insurance and the Uninsured amidst Changes to the Affordable Care Act – How does lack of insurance affect access to care? – 7451-14 | KFF](#)

³ [Healthy People 2030 – Preventive Care | US Department of Health and Human Services](#)

⁴ [Health Care Industry Insights: Why the Use of Preventive Services Is Still Low | CDC](#)

⁵ [Single-Payer Systems Likely to Save Money in US, Analysis Finds | UC San Francisco \(ucsf.edu\)](#)

⁶ [Universal Health Care Commission | Washington State Health Care Authority](#)

⁷ [Task Force on Universal Health Care | Oregon Health Authority – Office of Health Policy](#)