

Testimony in FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT of HB588

**Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act) House Health and
Government Operations Committee**

February 23, 2023

Dear Honorable Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and Members of the Committee,

La Clínica del Pueblo is pleased to support HB 588 with amendments.

La Clínica del Pueblo is a FQHC that has offered health and community services since 1983 in the Washington Metropolitan area. Our Prince George's County clinic located in Hyattsville opened in 2016. Our mission is to build a healthy Latino community through culturally appropriate health services, especially for those most in need. HB588 represents an important milestone in our journey towards creating a resilient healthcare system, which impacted communities of color disproportionately.

My name is Ria Arora. Though raised in California, I lived in Maryland for four years while attending Johns Hopkins University. While at Hopkins, I spent two years as a patient advocate at a pediatric clinic, connecting uninsured Latino families to resources related to social determinants of health. Last year, I moved to Washington, DC and now serve as an AmeriCorps fellow at La Clínica del Pueblo in the Gender and Health Program. I connect Latina women who are survivors of gender-based violence to community-based resources, legal, and medical services. This year marks my third year supporting Latino communities in Maryland. After my fellowship, I will attend medical school this fall.

Today, we would like to speak about the lack of health care coverage for Latino immigrants in Maryland. I have witnessed firsthand these adverse consequences. At Hopkins, I remember assisting a 45-year-old uninsured female immigrant with making a dental appointment, having already had several teeth fall out. At La Clínica, I continue to see these disparities with my clients in Maryland who already deal with the effects of trauma given that they are survivors of gender-based violence. I am currently working with a 26-year-old uninsured female immigrant experiencing a high-risk pregnancy. In a recent call with the hospital, I was told that because she has no health coverage, a surgery she might need would cost \$50,000 to \$60,000. Hearing these stories, especially with the potential of this bill, has mobilized me to challenge the status quo and take action by testifying before you all.

Today, I respectfully urge a favorable with amendment report of the HB588 Access to Care Act. As an incoming medical student and future physician, I want to practice in a world where patients do not have to sacrifice their right to healthcare to maintain their quality of life.

For the purposes of equity, La Clínica del Pueblo supports an amendment that ensures newly qualified individuals will receive the same subsidy rate as all other individuals covered under the Affordable Care Act.

Thank you for your consideration and your leadership!

Sincerely,
Ria Arora