



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Ariana B. Kelly, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: March 14th 2023

RE: HB0329 Commission on Universal Health Care

The MLLC supports HB0329 Commission on Universal Health Care

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0329.

Hispanics continue to have the highest uninsured rates of any racial or ethnic group within the state of Maryland. In 2019, The Kaiser Family Foundation reported the findings of The American Community Survey, which highlights that in Maryland 21.4 percent of Hispanics were uninsured, as compared to 3.8 percent for non-Hispanic whites.¹ This can be attributed in part to the systematic exclusions certain communities face from federal health insurance programs. Current programs are only open to U.S. Citizens and immigrants with certain immigration status. Undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients are not eligible for state or federal healthcare subsidies. A plan to extend access to health care to all, including immigrants who are not eligible due to status, presents an opportunity to emerge from this crisis equitably and to better position all communities to face future public health emergencies.² When people avoid getting treatment they risk getting sicker, leading to worse outcomes including loss of income, loss of employment, and even premature and avoidable death. A statewide single-payer system would ensure that all state residents have access to consistent and reliable health care when they need it, and have the potential to deliver that care in a more cost-effective way due to simplification of administrative costs, removal of the insurance profit layer, and economies of scale.

HB0329 would establish the Commission on Universal Health Care to study the viability of a single-payer system, and develop a plan to establish and implement a universal health care program. HB0329 does not commit the state to a single-payer system; it merely creates a commission that will study its viability and develop an implementation plan, similar to what the Kirwan commission did for education. The General Assembly would then be able to consider that plan and decide whether to move forward with it legislatively.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0329.

¹ [Kaiser Family Foundation. Uninsured Rates for the Nonelderly by Race/Ethnicity](#)

² [Kaiser Family Foundation. Health Coverage and Care for Immigrants. \(Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, December 2017\).](#)