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February 23, 2023

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

**BILL:** HB 588 – Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)

**POSITION:** Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County’s community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

**The Foundation is pleased to support HB 588 – Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act).**

HB 588 allows all Marylanders to access the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (Maryland’s Affordable Care Act marketplace), regardless of their immigration status. Moreover, the bill includes subsidies to assist newly eligible Marylanders in procuring and maintaining health insurance coverage.

Throughout Maryland, over 275,000 undocumented immigrants are unable to access the state’s Health Benefit Exchange. Maryland lags behind its progressive peer states in offering subsidized coverage to these communities who contribute so much to our economy and culture, including over \$240 million in tax revenue nationwide. Undocumented workers often operate on the frontlines of our economy, holding positions critical to developing our infrastructure and keeping our small business afloat. These workers are often more vulnerable to illness, hospitalization, and death – worsening health disparities among Black and Latino residents.

Health equity and justice are priorities for the Horizon Foundation. Along with a broad coalition of health providers, grassroots advocacy organizations, and health institutions, the Foundation pressed for the successful adoption of the Healthy Babies Equities Act (Chapter 28 of 2022), which will extend comprehensive medical care and other health care services to certain undocumented pregnant women and their children.

Locally, the Horizon Foundation helped convene the Howard County Health Justice Coalition, a similarly broad collection of individuals and organizations. The Health Justice Coalition successfully secured \$1.3 million to ensure vital prenatal and postpartum care is available and affordable for uninsured and underinsured women and children in Howard County.

The Horizon Foundation recognizes the need to offer affordable and reliable healthcare to all Marylanders, regardless of their immigration status. HB 588 will grant undocumented residents an opportunity to finally gain access to private health care coverage that has been available to other communities for nearly a decade. For this reason, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS HB 588** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration.