



Testimony on SB365/HB588
Access to Care Act of 2023

Position: Favorable with Amendments¹

To Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee; Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Every Marylander needs to have the ability to access medical coverage when they need it, so our union supports SB365/HB588 to expand healthcare coverage to undocumented immigrant communities in Maryland.

Although the Affordable Care Act allowed a monumental increase in terms of healthcare coverage for many Maryland families, this unfortunately did not apply to many immigrant families, including over 275,000 immigrants that are undocumented in Maryland. The Access to Care Act would change this by ensuring that all income-eligible Marylanders can purchase coverage through the exchange, regardless of their citizenship status. We also support the amendment to establish a state subsidy program to ensure that all new individuals who apply for Medicaid would have the appropriate funding to receive care.

In a time where many families, no matter the citizenship status, are contracting COVID and facing other healthcare disparities, allowing more families to become insured would only help to decrease the number of contractions and sick Marylanders in general. Suffering from COVID or other healthcare disparities not only impacts the sick individual, but both family and entire communities. For example, many immigrant families who have young children, often rely on the sole income of both parents to make ends meet. In this regard, if both parents contract COVID or experience healthcare disparities, it puts the lives of their kids at risk as well.

For 1199SEIU members, this bill is essential for two reasons. First, our members understand that increasing the number of insured individuals also means less of a burden on our short-staffed hospitals. When patients can afford primary care, they are less likely to end up in the hospital. Any step to provide individuals with healthcare coverage to alleviate this strain in short staffed facilities would benefit both our hospital resources and improve patient care. Second, many of our members come from immigrant families themselves. They know the benefits of what health insurance can do to change the lives of immigrant families and believe that without health insurance, it leaves many Marylanders to a life of increased mortality and family destruction. We ask this Committee to give a **favorable** report, with an **amendment** to create a subsidy program, on SB365/HB588 Access to Care Act.

In Unity,
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¹ **Proposed Amendment:** Section V - add a number A (5): "That provides State premium assistance and cost-sharing reduction subsidies for Qualified Residents that seek to attain the same level of health plan affordability and limit on out-of-pocket costs experienced by all other health plan purchasers on the exchange."