

Dear Health and Government Operations Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA.. I am a resident of **District 41**. **I am testifying in support of passing HB0588, the Access to Care Act, with amendments.**



As a retired medical social worker, I feel strongly about this bill. I met many people who were not citizens and did not have health insurance in the 30 years that I worked in medical settings. I had clients with chronic and terminal illness in Maryland. I found that without insurance, people could not get necessary treatment to prolong their lives or to live comfortably with a serious illness. Lack of health insurance not only affected the sick person, but also their families. I had a patient with cancer who was told by her doctor that she couldn't get treatment because she had no insurance. She also could not apply for Medicaid since she was not a citizen. Her only option was to wait to die. She was 28 years old with 2 young children. While it is true that emergency rooms take care of sick people, they can't provide ongoing care like chemotherapy or radiation treatment. Unfortunately, there aren't any care options for people with cancer. It is a death sentence since they can't receive treatments.

Unfortunately, over 275,000 undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Exchange. The Access to Care Act would open the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (ACA Coverage) to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility, regardless of their immigrant status.

Our state and communities become stronger and more resilient when we expand health care coverage. Benefits of expanded coverage include:

- Increased access to primary care physicians that results in earlier detection of health problems and more stable long-term management of chronic diseases; this decreases the number of people who die at earlier ages from preventable causes.
- Greater access to primary care clinics and medical practices that results in reduced use of emergency departments (ED); this decreases the number seeking care at EDs and reduces the cost of ED care for all of us.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of passing HB0588 (Access to Care Act) with amendments.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Bonnie Weissberg  
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